REMARKS

ON THE

REVEREND MR. EMMONS'S

DISSERTATION

ON THE

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS

FOR

ADMISSION AND *ACCESS*

TO THE

CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS;

AND ON HIS

STRICTURES ON A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE CHURCH.

BY MOSES HEMMENWAY, D. D.

PASTOR OF A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN *WELLS*.

I am for peace: but when I ſpeak, they are for war.

Pſalm CXX. 7.

PRINTED AT THE Apollo Preſs IN BOSTON,

BY BELKNAP AND HALL,

Sold by them; by *Hudſon* and *Goodwin*, Hartford; *Iſaac Beers*, New-Haven; *Bennet Wheeler*, Providence; *Leonard Worceſter*, Worceſter; *Edmund M. Blunt*, Newburyport; *John Melcher*, Portſmouth; and by *Wait* and *George*, Portland.

MDCCXCIV.

714/10

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Remarks are diſpoſed in Chapters, and Sections, anſwering to thoſe in the Diſſertation *and* Strictures *here noticed; which may be found convenient for ſuch readers (if any ſuch there ſhould be) who may be willing to take the trouble of comparing them together. Though many things have been paſſed over, which might have been objects of animadverſion, yet it has been endeavored that all points of chief importance ſhould have ſome due attention paid to them.*

WELLS (Diſtrict of Maine) May 1, 1794.

ADVERTISEMENT.

REMARKS, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

MR. EMMONS introduces his Diſſertation with ſaying, that "The firſt miniſters and churches in New England were unanimouſly agreed, that none ought to come to the table of the Lord but the ſubjects of ſaving grace."

But no proof of this is attempted; and I preſume it can never be made to appear. It ſeems indeed to have been the general opinion, that none ought to be admitted to full communion but true ſaints in a judgment of chriſtian charity; and that none ought to come but thoſe who find reaſon to hope they are ſincere. And the *Diſcourſe on the Church* expreſsly agrees with them in both theſe points.

But it is certain they held and taught, and that unanimouſly ſo far as appears, that doubting chriſtians may and ought to come to communion. Now ſince it is uncertain whether thoſe who doubt their own ſincerity are true ſaints, if theſe may and ought to come to communion, it can never be maintained that true ſaints only ought to come. If thoſe have an acknowledged warrant to come, who do not certainly appear to be ſaints, it can never be proved, that true ſaints only have a warrant. Why ſhould we then think that wiſe and good men were unanimouſly ſo inconſiſtent? Is it not injurious to preſume ſuch a thing, and that without any ſufficient evidence?

However, they certainly held thoſe fundamental principles, which, if they are true, Mr. E. acknowledges that "the ſcheme I

have built upon them is true, and muſt ſtand forever." They held that profeſſors of the true religion, with their children, are viſible ſaints, members of the viſible church, though unregenerate: That they are intereſted in the covenant, and under the outward adminiſtration of it. That the outward ordinances and privileges are granted and belong to viſible ſaints, as ſuch. That all thoſe are to be admitted to outward communion who hold forth evidence, to a judgment of charity, that they are in a meaſure actually fit for it; and that thoſe may and ought to come, who are ſincere in religion, ſo far as they know themſelves. So that *the Diſcourſe on the Church*, is founded on principles which have been generally received in our churches, and maintained by our moſt approved Divines. Accordingly our author attacks all or moſt of theſe principles, in which the firſt miniſters and churches, were agreed, and builds his ſcheme on the ruins of them.

Mr. Stoddard, it is ſaid (for I never read any of his writings on the ſubject, except what I found quoted by others) advanced ſome ſentiments different from the more received opinion. But if he held that the church ought to receive ſuch as give no evidence of ſaving grace, and, that ſuch may and ought to come who know themſelves to be unconverted, then I have expreſsly declared that I am otherwiſe minded; and if this be what Dr. Mather calls a "ſtrange doctrine" it is a doctrine which I never taught.

Mr. E. adds, "Miniſters and churches have generally been divided into Edwardeans and Stoddardeans." I do not think that our miniſters and churches are in general fully in ſentiment either with Mr. Stoddard or Mr. Edwards. It is the more general opinion, I conceive, that thoſe eminent men carried points too far, as diſputants are too apt to do; and that if due abatements were made on each ſide, their ſchemes would coincide in all points of importance. Be this as it may, Mr. Emmons differs greatly from both, as well as from our churches in general; as we ſhall have occaſion to obſerve in the ſequel. Our author adds, "Here the diſpute reſted for many years; and here perhaps it had been well for the public if it had ſtill reſted. After two ſuch able divines had amply diſcuſſed the ſubject, there was but little ground to expect that much new light could be thrown upon it by any who ſhould reſume the controverſy." If Mr. E. thought ſo, ſome may aſk, what need there was for his reſuming the diſpute? Was it merely for the ſake of wrangling, from which little or no light was expected? Or was it that he thought himſelf capable of throwing light on the ſubject, though

this was not to be expected from any other? But though the author of the Diſcourſe on the Church means not to apologize to Mr. E. yet it may be ſeen, I think, that his deſign was not to revive a controverſy, but rather to try, after ſo many years ſince the diſpute was in agitation, whether any thing could be done to reconcile thoſe, who, in the heat of contention, might ſeem too much diſaffected to each other: And I am not diſappointed in finding ſome moved with reſentment at ſuch a deſign. They who delight in contention, in biting and worrying others, it may be expected will be apt to fall foul on thoſe who attempt to take away their balls.

The diſcourſe which Mr. E. has made the object of his *Strictures*, was not deſigned as an attack on any perſon or ſcheme—The author aimed, without attachment to, or prejudice againſt any, to join with each party, wherein they appear to have truth and reaſon on their ſide, and no further. Whether he has in this offended againſt the rules of prudence, modeſty, or charity, the impartial public will judge.

CHAPTER I.

MR. EMMONS's firſt chapter gives a definition of the Church. And to avoid the miſtakes of others "who," he ſays, "have palmed their own, inſtead of the ſcripture ideas," he profeſſes "to draw his definition from the pure ſource of divine revelation." The firſt ſenſe mentioned is "the whole number of them who ſhall be ſanctified and ſaved." Of this there is no diſpute.

The ſecond ſenſe is the univerſal viſible church, which he defines; "The whole number of God's *profeſſing people* in all parts of the world." By this he means thoſe only who make an *actual* and *perſonal* profeſſion of religion, excluſive of their children. But to this we object, that it leaves out a great part of thoſe who, according to the ſcriptures, and by the general conſent of chriſtians, belong to the viſible church. Mr. Edwards ſays, "All who acknowledge infant baptiſm allow infants, who are the proper ſubjects of baptiſm, and are baptized, to be in ſome ſort members of the chriſtian church." How unanimous the proteſtant churches are in this point, may be ſeen in the harmony of their confeſſions of faith. The ſcriptures alſo plainly teach, that little children belong to the kingdom of

heaven: by which is meant the visible church. They are holy, or saints; a title given to none of the children of men but members of the church. "If the root be holy, so are the branches." The promise of the covenant which forms the church, is to the children, as well as the parents. These proofs, which I only hint at with many others, have been fully opened and defended by others. And Mr. E. has said nothing to invalidate them. Though he pretends to draw his definitions from the scriptures, yet none of the texts he has cited, intimate or imply that *actual* and *personal professors only*, are members of the visible church; so that he has "palmed his own, instead of the scripture ideas," upon the minds of his readers. And we find nothing to support this definition but his assertion.

And there is not the least evidence, that congregational churches consisted only of adult personal professors.

If *the church* had been rightly defined, according to the scriptures, and the general sense of christians, it would have appeared that every particular in the passage quoted from the *Discourse* is undeniably true. There is, however, a great misrepresentation when he says, that "I take some adult persons, who have made no profession of religion, not only into the visible church, but into the covenant of grace." He will doubtless grant that there are adult believers who are not professors; and that these are in the covenant of grace, and in the invisible church. But that they are in the visible church, is not said or intimated; and it appears not that any thing is asserted in the quoted passage, but what is *granted in fact*, if not by Mr. Emmons, yet by all others who acknowledge infant baptism, and have published their sentiments on the subject.

CHAPTER II.

IN the next chapter our author considers the covenant of grace, from pages 12 to 44. The chapter is divided into five sections.

SECTION I.

HE defines a covenant, as distinguished from a mere declaration or promise, to be "A mutual contract, stipulation, or agreement between two or more parties, by which they bind themselves to each other upon certain conditions. Every cov-

enant requires the conſent of the parties concerned. Mutual conſent is the only thing which gives ſanction to a covenant. God can no more enter into covenant with men without their perſonal conſent, than they can enter into covenant with each other without their perſonal conſent." On this I would obſerve,

1. Whatever any may ſuppoſe that the word *covenant* may ſignify in its ſtricteſt and moſt proper ſenſe, as uſed among mankind, yet in ſcripture it is certainly uſed in a larger ſenſe. A divine conſtitution containing a grant of ſpecial favours to the children of men, and enjoining duties as the condition of the continuance of thoſe favors, or the grant of further ones, is, in the language of ſcripture, a covenant, though a perſonal and formal conſent of the ſubject party were not given to it. This being the caſe, it is in vain to ſay that ſuch a divine conſtitution is termed covenant in ſcripture, only in a *figurative* ſenſe, becauſe ſome circumſtances and formalities required in human compacts are wanting. If it be a covenant in the ſcriptural ſenſe, this is ſufficient to ſupport us in giving it that denomination.

2. Suppoſe mutual conſent of the parties, is held neceſſary in a proper formal covenant, yet the *actual perſonal conſent* of all who are comprehended and intereſted therein is not neceſſary. This appears from the common ſenſe and uſages of mankind, among whom covenants are often made by authorized repreſentatives, in which many are intereſted, who have not actually and perſonally conſented. Parents covenant for themſelves and children. Agents covenant on behalf of thoſe they act for; who are held as much bound to fulfil the ſtipulated engagements, and as fully entitled to the ſtipulated grants and privileges, as if they had perſonally conſented to them. And it is abundantly evident from ſcripture, that in the covenants which God has condeſcended to make with the children of men, many were included without their actual and perſonal conſent; others being authorized to covenant in their behalf. In the primitive conſtitution, under which our firſt parents were placed, it appears not that their actual conſent was aſked for, as neceſſary to their coming under it. But it is certain that their poſterity were intereſted in it without their perſonal conſent. And the covenant with Abraham was eſtabliſhed with him, and his unborn poſterity. "The covenant in the plains of Moab was alſo made with the little ones, as well as the men of Iſrael; with thoſe who were not, as well as with thoſe who were preſent." In theſe, with other inſtances, thoſe who per-

ſonally conſented to the covenant, repreſented and acted on the behalf of others, who were not preſent, as well as for themſelves.

It may be ſaid, that when men authoriſe an agent to repreſent them, and covenant in their behalf, they virtually conſent to whatever he ſhall do purſuant to that appointment. I anſwer. Admitting this, yet it is plain that the repreſentatives of a State are authoriſed to covenant on behalf of many, who could have no voice in appointing them, ſuch as infants, and thoſe who are unborn. This is alſo the caſe when parents covenant for their children. Now if men have a right to authoriſe others to act in their name, has not God a right to authoriſe whom he pleaſes to act in the name of others in conſenting to his covenant, which is not only moſt equitable, but greatly in favor of thoſe who are included in it?

God has a right, as the Sovereign of the world, to eſtabliſh ſuch a conſtitution as, in the language of the ſcripture, is called a covenant, and to bring men under the obligation of it without their formal conſent; and though we do not ſay that the bare propoſal of the covenant of grace to men gives them an intereſt in it, if they reject it; yet God can authoriſe ſome perſons to conſent to his covenant on behalf of others, as well as themſelves. And though all who are intereſted in the covenant of grace are *federally holy*, yet they have not a right of acceſs and admiſſion to the Lord's ſupper, unleſs they appear to be in a meaſure actually fit for it.

Though Mr. Emmons owns, that "the plain literal meaning of Deut.xxix. 10—13, is, that God entered into covenant with ſome of the Iſraelites who neither heard nor conſented to the covenant," yet he cannot admit this literal ſenſe for various reaſons.

1. "Becauſe it is," he ſays, "contrary to the nature of things that God ſhould take men into covenant without their knowledge and conſent." But this we deny, and have ſhewn that God and man have often taken men into covenant without their perſonal knowledge and conſent. Nor do we find any thing to ſupport Mr. Emmons's aſſertion, except his own definition, which makes perſonal conſent neceſſary to one's having an intereſt in a covenant—A definition which ſcripture and common ſenſe diſapprove, and which depends merely on his word.

2. He ſays "God required all who were preſent to give their explicit conſent to the covenant. But there was no occaſion for all this formality and ſolemnity, if God could have taken

them into covenant without their knowledge and conſent." This conſequence we deny, and he cannot prove it. There might be occaſion and good reaſon for this formality and ſolemnity, though God can take men into covenant without it. He adds,

3. "It appears from a ſtanding ſtatute in Iſrael, that God meant to take that people into covenant from generation to generation by their own explicit conſent." Anſwer. The ſtatute here referred to, Deut. xxxi. 9—13, proves it not. It only orders that the law be read before all Iſrael in the year of releaſe at the feaſt of tabernacles; but ſays nothing of God's entering into covenant with them by their own explicit conſent. This Mr. E. adds without book, or any weighty reaſon that we can find. And if we ſhould grant him all that he here craves and preſumes, it would not prove but that God may take men into his covenant without their perſonal conſent, which the ſcriptures declare he has done.

4. "If God may enter into covenant with thoſe who are abſent, as well as thoſe who are preſent, then he may take men, as well as infants, into covenant without their knowledge and conſent." Anſwer. This is no more than is often done in human compacts. And if the covenants be equitable and advantageous to thoſe who are comprehended, none complains, or diſputes the right of thoſe who conſented to them in this public capacity. And has not God power and authority to take his creatures into covenant without their perſonal conſent, when men have an acknowledged right to do ſo by their fellow men? The reaſon why adult perſons are not ordinarily taken into God's covenant without their perſonal conſent is, becauſe this is the will and pleaſure of God, not becauſe God has not power and right to take whom he will into his covenant, without their perſonal conſent, whenever he pleaſes. The words quoted from the *Diſcourſe* are nothing to Mr. E's purpoſe, nor imply any thing inconſiſtent with what has now been aſſerted.

Our author concludes, that "When we are told God took the abſent as well as the preſent into covenant, the plain and obvious meaning is, that he meant to propoſe the covenant to all, and to require all, as opportunity preſented, to embrace it, and lay themſelves under covenant obligations to obedience." Anſwer. The words do not expreſs, nor will bear ſuch a meaning, without departing entirely from their literal, proper and obvious import, for which no neceſſity appears; the reaſons which he offers for this, being of no weight. Nor has he pretended to give any parallel example, to ſhew

that his way of interpretation is admiſſible. It has nothing to ſupport it, that we can find, only he likes not the plain literal ſenſe, which would overthrow his notion of a covenant, which, in defiance of common ſenſe, and plain pointed language of ſcripture, he advances, without any thing to ſupport it but his own aſſertion, which in argument is nothing. The queſtion then is, whether ſcripture and the common ſenſe of mankind ought to bend and conform to his notion; or whether his notion ought to be corrected by the ſtandards forementioned? A queſtion, I think, eaſy to be anſwered.

SECTION II.

HE undertakes in the next place to ſtate the covenant of grace preciſely, which he ſays contains neither more nor leſs than "the promiſe of God to ſave mankind through faith in the mediator."

This is indeed a moſt important part or article of the covenant. And this is all that the ſcriptures, which he has quoted, imply. But it cannot be admitted as a juſt definition of the evangelical covenant or conſtitution in its full amplitude and extent, nor is this in the leaſt intimated in any of thoſe texts he has brought to ſupport his definition.

This covenant contains the whole revealed rule, according to which the church viſible and inviſible, with all the members of it, is conſtituted and governed by Chriſt. As there is an inviſible government adminiſtered by Chriſt, in which he diſpenſes his ſaving bleſſings to thoſe who are ſaints in heart, ſo the covenant is the rule, according to which this inviſible government is adminiſtered, and theſe inviſible bleſſings diſpenſed. There is alſo a viſible government, which viſible inſtituted churches are under; and the goſpel covenant is the rule, by which thoſe who have the adminiſtration of this government under Chriſt, muſt conduct themſelves in the houſe of God. And as faith is required, and the condition of our right to the inviſible grace and bleſſings of the covenant, ſo profeſſion and viſible expreſſions of faith are required, as the condition of our right to ſuch outward privileges as are, by the covenant, granted excluſively to viſible ſaints. It is to be obſerved, however, that the infants of believers are in the covenant, though incapable of complying with the conditions required of adult perſons.

So that the covenant contains not only a promiſe of ſalvation to believers, but alſo a grant of outward ordinances and privileges to profeſſors, and their children. As a believer has no

right to ſpecial ordinances unleſs he be a profeſſor, ſo a profeſſor is not entitled to the promiſe of ſalvation unleſs he be a believer. Yet the promiſe of ſalvation belongs to every believer. And every credible profeſſor has a right, according to the covenant, to be admitted as a member of the viſible church, to outward communion in ordinances; ſince it is to the viſible church that the goſpel miniſtry and ordinances are given. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 8—12.

SECTION III.

THE diſtinction between the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption, which is the ſubject of this ſection, we approve. The neceſſity or pertinency of introducing it in a diſſertation on the qualifications for church communion is not ſo obvious. But Mr. E. ſeems to have had a mind to make an occaſion of finding fault with the author of the *Diſcourſe*, for which he all along ſhows a very good will. After quoting part of the deſcription which I had given of the new covenant, and which he, without any warrant, repreſents as meant for an "*accurate definition*," he adds, "This definition bears not one feature of the covenant of grace, but bears an exact image of the covenant of redemption. In plain terms, it is the definition of the covenant of redemption, inſtead of the definition of the covenant of grace." And he ſays, "I have unhappily blended them together." One might wonder what he was thinking of when this *Stricture* iſſued from his pen. It might be aſked, how theſe two covenants could be blended together in a definition, which is a definition of the covenant of redemption, but bears not one feature of the covenant of grace? It is a ſtrange way of blending, that is, mixing two things together, to take only one of them. But to paſs over this, I aſk, "Is the covenant of redemption founded in the mediation of Chriſt? Does it contain a law or rule of duty, for the church? Again, is not the covenant of grace founded in the mediation of Chriſt, and adminiſtered by him? Is not the church formed and governed according to it? Does it not contain a law or rule of duty for the church, enforced with penalties? Does it not eſtabliſh a mutual relation and connection between covenant duties and privileges, making the one conditional of the other? Is no feature of the covenant of grace viſible in all or any of theſe particulars? Surely Mr. E.'s underſtanding muſt have been in an eclipſe when he wrote this ſtrange *Stricture*. And this may account for the complaint he makes of the obſcurity of the *Diſcourſe*. A defect in the eye makes things appear obſcure.

SECTION IV.

FOLLOWS next, an attempt to prove that the covenant with Abraham, is not the covenant of grace. Here he goes openly into the camp of the Anabaptiſts, and takes his weapons from their arſenal.

He ſays, "The covenant of grace and the covenant with Abraham are ſo nearly and neceſſarily connected, that they are often conſidered as one and the ſame covenant." All who acknowledge infant baptiſm have hitherto held that the covenant with Abraham is the covenant of grace, which they have alſo proved by ſubſtantial arguments, which Mr. E. has not attempted to anſwer.

"But the definition which has been given of the covenant of grace does by no means apply," he ſays, "to the covenant of Abraham." Without inquiring how far this is true, I anſwer, ſince his definition of the covenant of grace has nothing but his word to ſupport it, and has been ſhewn to be defective, the covenant with Abraham may be the covenant of grace, though a definition framed to ſerve a favorite ſcheme ſhould not exactly agree with it. But if by the covenant of grace we underſtand the revealed conſtitution or rule, according to which the church is formed and governed by the mediator; and if the promiſes and grants of the covenant contain all privileges and bleſſings for the people of God, which are needful for them in their preſent and future ſtate; then the covenant with Abraham, in every article, may be, and is the covenant of grace, though it contain ſome grants and injunctions peculiar to him and his poſterity, and though ſome circumſtantial articles might be alterable at the divine pleaſure.

Mr. E. mentions a difference between the covenant of grace, and that with Abraham, in ſeveral points. 1. He ſays, "Faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, but circumciſion is the principal condition of the covenant of Abraham." Anſwer. The covenant of Abraham contained a promiſe of ſpiritual bleſſings to true believers, as well as of outward privileges to thoſe who were viſibly intereſted in it. So does the covenant of grace. Circumciſion was appointed as a ſeal or token of an intereſt in this covenant, which contained theſe promiſes and grants. 2. He ſays, "The covenant of grace reſpects the believer *only*, but the covenant of Abraham chiefly and ultimately reſpected his poſterity." Anſwer. This we deny; it has been ſufficiently diſproved by thoſe who have defended the

church membership and baptism right of infants. Mr. E. has not even attempted to invalidate their arguments, nor do we find that his own assertion to the contrary has any thing to support it but his word, which must go for nothing.

He then mentions several promises in the covenant with Abraham, which were appropriated to him and his posterity. Then we say, that the covenant of grace contained a grant of peculiar privileges to Abraham and his posterity, besides the promise of salvation through faith in the mediation. But this proves not that these peculiar grants formed a distinct covenant by themselves. These additional articles, were chiefly provisions for administering external government in a national church, to be formed of his posterity to issue from Isaac. Mr. E. calls these *appendages of the covenant*. But he gives no reason why they are not as properly *articles* of the covenant as any others. And undoubtedly they are so, while they stand in force. It is no unusual thing for a covenant or charter to contain a grant of special privileges to some, besides those which are granted to the members of the community indiscriminately.

SECTION V.

THE subject of this section is the Sinai covenant, which it is said is founded on, yet distinct from the covenant of grace.

And the main point which Mr. E. professes to maintain is, "That this covenant required the profession and exercise of grace, as the condition upon which divine favors were promised."

Whoever have differed from him in opinion, there is nothing in the *Discourse on the Church* which discovers the author's sentiments on this point. But he pretends that I have intimated the same idea which others, whom he opposes, have expressed. And quotes some words which contain no such intimation. With this observation I might fairly pass over what he has so copiously offered on this argument. And if I should by way of digression attend a little to his speculations and arguings on this subject, the observation just mentioned may serve as a reason for touching but lightly and briefly upon it.

That more than outward obedience was required in the law, constitution, or covenant ratified and promulgated at mount Sinai, is, I think, as certain and evident, as it is that the moral law, which requires a perfect and sinless righteousness, was there given and enjoined on the people, as the rule of their duty.

But whether and how far this was required *as the condition upon which divine favors were promiſed*, and what was the neceſſary condition hereof, is the queſtion.

Though Mr. E. does not ſay that ſinleſs obedience was the neceſſary condition on which divine favors were promiſed; yet he has ſaid what, I think, fairly implies, and obviouſly ſuggeſts this idea. For diſputing againſt thoſe who hold that divine favors were promiſed to outward obedience, he argues, that "obedience to the whole moral law was required." Now unleſs all this be required as the condition on which divine favors are promiſed, his argument, is inconcluſive. Though perfect obedience is required, yet if divine favors are promiſed to ſome whoſe obedience is not perfect, then perfect obedience is not required as the neceſſary condition of promiſed favors; and then divine favors may have been promiſed to outward obedience, notwithſtanding ſinleſs obedience is enjoined as duty. Again he argues to the ſame purpoſe, "If the law of God requires them to be perfectly holy, then it condemned them for every external action which flowed from a ſinful heart." This is a juſt conſequence, and we may ſay alſo, then it condemned all who were not perfectly holy. But if divine favors are promiſed to ſome who have not that perfect holineſs which the law requires, and ſo are condemned by the law for the want of it, then this argument will not prove but that divine favors may have been promiſed to outward obedience. All whoſe righteouſneſs is not without any ſinful defect, are tranſgreſſors of that law, which condemneth every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, as really trangreſſors, as thoſe who yield only outward obedience.

Now, if ſinleſs obedience to the whole moral law was the condition upon which divine favors were promiſed in the Sinai covenant, then this condition was never fulfilled by any mere man; for there is no man who ſinneth not, and ſo no one ever was entitled, according to this covenant, to the promiſed bleſſings.

But it is plain that Mr. Emmons did not think that the bleſſings of divine favor, were in the Sinai covenant, promiſed to thoſe only who are without ſin. He ſays, "While they continued obedient, God granted them outward proſperity," which allows that they did ſometimes yield the obedience required. Again, "When the people of God fell under his rebukes, they were required not only to reform, but repent, in order to regain his favor." But if the Sinai covenant promiſed no favors to *ſinners*, if it had promiſes for thoſe only who continued in

all things written in the book of the law to do them, then it would be plainly abſurd to ſuppoſe that repentance is required *in order to regain God's favor*; for a penitent ſinner, is a ſinner ſtill, and is no more entitled to thoſe favors which are promiſed to thoſe only whoſe righteouſneſs is perfect, than they who have only yielded outward obedience.

Sinleſs obedience then, though required in the Sinai law as duty, was not, according to Mr. E. the condition upon which only divine favors were promiſed. For he allows very juſtly, that there are promiſes to penitent ſinners, and to ſuch exerciſes of grace as are found in thoſe who are not perfectly holy. So that in this the Sinai covenant differs not from the covenant of grace, but perfectly coincides with it. He alſo holds that faith in the Meſſiah was in the condition of the Sinai covenant, and that all ſpiritual bleſſings are comprized in the promiſe, that the Lord will be a God to his people. Theſe things would incline one to think that the Sinai covenant was, or included in it the covenant of grace, notwithſtanding Mr. E's two deciſive reaſons to the contrary; which yet ſeem not to be unanſwerable.

But though he inſiſts that true piety was the condition of God's promiſed favor, yet, according to him, *a profeſſion of real godlineſs*, even when the heart was not ſincere, brought the Iſraelites into a covenant relation to God. He is large in proving that they did profeſs real religion when they covenanted with God. And this their profeſſion, gave them an intereſt in the covenant, laid them under its bond, and they by it became the covenant people of God, who accordingly avouched them to be his people, and himſelf to be their God, declaring them members of that national church to whom his oracles and ordinances were given, which the apoſtle ſays was a great advantage. Mr. E. in effect owns that thoſe who were not ſincere in their profeſſion were in covenant with God, as well as others. For he ſays "when they manifeſted hypocriſy they are charged with breaking covenant," which could not have been true, if they had not been in and under it.

It ſeems then, according to him, that divine favors were promiſed in the Sinai covenant, upon condition of perfect obedience to the law and of repentance, faith in the mediator, and real though imperfect exerciſes of grace; and alſo of a profeſſion of real godlineſs, though without godly ſincerity.

Theſe things have the appearance of inconſiſtency. And indeed his notions ſeem to have been ſomewhat confuſed and in-

digeſted. But inſtead of urging this to his diſadvantage, let us try how far theſe different repreſentations may conſiſt with truth.

Let us go upon the hypotheſis which many judicious divines have laid down that the Sinai covenant or conſtitution, taken in its largeſt ſenſe, infolds or comprehends a covenant of works, injoining perfect obedience to the law of God, promiſing that the man who doth theſe things ſhall live in them, and denouncing a curſe againſt all tranſgreſſors, unleſs relieved by the covenant of grace. Then according to the tenor of *this part* of this complex conſtitution, perfect obedience is the condition of life and the divine favor. This promulgation of the law, in form of a covenant, was not given to move ſinners, to ſeek juſtification and eternal life by the righteouſneſs of the law, but to ſhew them their duty, convince them of ſin, and excite them to ſeek ſalvation with the benefits of God's favor in the way in which only it is obtainable, that is, upon the terms of the covenant of grace. Accordingly,

The Sinai covenant contains alſo a revelation of the *covenant of grace* promiſing pardon and the favor of God to pentent ſinners, through faith in the promiſed Saviour, who was to bruiſe the ſerpent's head, whoſe atoning ſacrifice was typified by the ſacrifices under the law. *It alſo acknowledged the people of* Iſrael, *who profeſſed faith and obedience to God as his holy peculiar people in covenent with him*, and inſtituted ordinances of worſhip and diſcipline for them, and granted peculiar outward religious privileges to them, as his viſible church, ſo that ſalvation was promiſed upon the condition of gracious ſincerity in religion; and the outward ordinances and privileges of his viſible church were granted to all who avouched the Lord to be their God, and themſelves to be his people.

There was alſo a ſpecial conſtitution or compact, by which they were formed and organized as a commonwealth under God as their political King. Their civil conſtitution was a *Theocracy*, or kingdom of God. And it has been commonly thought that God as the political King of the Hebrew commonwealth, promiſed them national proſperity, if they were outwardly obſervant of his laws and ordinances. And this opinion may be agreeable to truth, for ought that I know. At leaſt I find not that Mr. E. has proved the contrary. However, I ſhall not take the trouble to examine his reaſonings on this ſubject.*

* Though I ſhall not undertake to examine particularly the arguments with which Mr. Emmons would prove that holy obedience was the condition of all bleſſings, temporal as well as ſpiritual, in the Sinai covenant, and that it was

But he argues, that the Sinai covenant cannot be the covenant of grace, which exiſted long before the former, and alſo long ſince it has been aboliſhed. But this no more proves that the covenant of grace was not included in that at Sinai, than that the moral law was not included in it. Indeed, if we take the Sinai covenant merely for that *part* of this complex conſtitution,

inconſiſtent with the perfections of God, and ſo impoſſible, that he ſhould make mere outward obedience, the condition of any promiſed favors, yet there is one argument, which is, I think, ſufficient to overthrow all arguments to this purpoſe, and that is plain undeniable FACT.

It is certainly a favor to be received as the viſible people of God, in covenant with him, and ſo admitted to the peculiar religious privileges with which they were diſtinguiſhed. Therefore the apoſtle owns that the Jews had a great advantage in having the divine oracles and ordinances committed to them. Now the condition upon which this favor was granted was, according to Mr. Emmons, a profeſſed conſent to the covenant. And accordingly this privilege was upon this condition granted to many whoſe hearts were not right.

Again, keeping the paſſover according to the outward rites preſcribed was enjoined as the condition of their being preſerved, when the deſtroying angel cut off the firſt born in Egypt. And it is ſaid, that all the children of Iſrael in keeping the paſſover, did as the Lord commanded Moſes and Aaron, and ſo upon this condition were preſerved, though many of them were not ſaints in heart.

Again, their going out of Egypt was the condition of their deliverance from bondage to the Egyptians. Their looking at the brazen ſerpent was an outward act required as the condition of their being healed; nor have we any reaſon to think that this mercy was ſhewn only to thoſe who exerciſed grace in uſing the appointed mean of their healing. So their going into the promiſed land, according to the commandment of God, and ſubduing the inhabitants, was required as a condition of their having it in poſſeſſion. And theſe acts of outward obedience did put thoſe in poſſeſſion who were graceleſs, as well as thoſe who were upright.

But why do I mention particular inſtances? It is the general law of nature, according to which God governs the world, that outward actions are the appointed means or conditions of obtaining temporal bleſſings, both to ſaints and ſinners.

Now, if it be not inconſiſtent with the character of God, ordinarily to connect temporal bleſſings with outward actions both of ſaints and ſinners, it can never be proved inconſiſtent with his character to make known to them ſuch connection; nay, he has done it in fact. The known courſe of nature makes it manifeſt, beſides declarations in his word to the ſame purpoſe. Nor can it be proved inconſiſtent with the Divine character to promiſe or covenant with men, that if they will uſe theſe outward means, they ſhall ordinarily or always obtain theſe bleſſings.

Though outward acts of graceleſs perſons are ſinful, yet it is not rewarding ſin, to make them the condition of their obtaining temporal favors. Care to preſerve life is a mean or condition of enjoying life, both to ſaints and ſinners. If outward actions were bleſſed *becauſe they were ſinful*, ſo that the ſame actions, if done in a holy manner, had no bleſſing annexed; this would be rewarding ſin. And there is nothing abſurd in ſuppoſing, that outward actions may be made the condition of temporal bleſſings to graceleſs men, who will hereafter be puniſhed for not doing them in a holy manner. Nor is this ſuppoſition contrary to any divine declarations concerning ſuch obedience. Let theſe hints ſuffice on a point which is only touched on, by way of digreſſion.

which appointed temporary ordinances, ritual and civil, for the Iſraelites, theſe taken thus abſtractly, and ſeparate from the reſt, were not the covenant of grace. But being connected and incorporated with that gracious conſtitution, by which the church is formed, theſe, while they remained in force, became a part of it So a cion taken ſeparately from the ſtock into which it is ingrafted, is not *that tree*; but when ingrafted in, it becomes a branch of it. But if it ſhould afterwards be cut off, it would then ceaſe to be a branch of that tree, ſuppoſing the tree ſtill to remain.

And indeed, Mr. E. in effect ſays, that the covenant of grace was contained in that of Sinai. For he ſays, that the Jews were broken of from *this* by unbelief, even after its temporary ordinances had expired, and were vaniſhing away. And beſides, the apoſtle ſays, that the Gentiles were grafted into that ſtock from which the Jews were broken. But the Gentiles were not taken into any covenant from which the Jews were broken, except the covenant of grace. And this again ſhews that the Jews, who were not ſaints in heart, had been in the covenant: elſe they could not have been broken off. I might further argue that the Sinai covenant was, or contained the covenant of grace from the promiſes of mercy, even ſpiritual bleſſings to penitent ſinners, of which Mr. E. takes notice; and which are peculiar to the covenant of grace. But theſe remarks may ſuffice.

We ſhall now briefly conſider the remarks with which this chapter is concluded.

1. "That it was owing to God's double relation to the ſeed of Abraham, that he owned and treated the Jews as his peculiar people, when they revolted from him, and became extremely corrupt." This notion of *a double relation* ſeems to have been invented to evade the argument with which it is proved, that the Jews were intereſted in the covenant, and members of the viſible church, when they were ſcandalouſly corrupt. But it appears not that they were owned by God as his peculiar people on any other account than their being in that covenant, by which the Jewiſh church was formed. Scandalous wickedneſs is indeed a breach of covenant, for which a perſon *deſerves* to be uncovenanted, and cut off from the people of God. But it does not actually uncovenant him, or cauſe him to be no member of the church, till he is actually rejected, excommunicated, and cut off, by the ordinance of diſcipline, or the hand of providence. David and Solomon, and other true ſaints, deſerved to have been caſt off for their breach of covenant. But it is

an article of the covenant that God would not take his loving kindneſs from *them*. So it was an article of the covenant, as revealed to Abraham, that his poſterity ſhould be a peculiar people to God, favored above others with religious privileges; that the viſible church ſhould continue with them till the promiſed ſeed ſhould ſpring from among them according to the fleſh. Therefore God was merciful and patient towards them, and dealt not with them according to their deſerts; and though he often reproved and chaſtiſed them, and at length deprived them, for a time, of many of their privileges, while they were captives at Babylon; yet he did not cut them off from an intereſt in his covenant, and a ſtanding in his viſible church, till he had fulfilled his promiſe to Abraham. And then, when they had filled up the meaſure of their ſins by crucifying Chriſt, and obſtinately rejecting the goſpel, and deſpitefully perſecuting the chriſtians, they were excommunicated, and no longer owned by God as his covenant people. The kingdom of God was taken from them.

A ſecond remark is, that "the covenant of grace has always been the ſame. It is a covenant, in which God engages to ſave ſinners through faith in the mediator." This is indeed, and always has been, the moſt important article of the covenant. But there are other articles which contain the rule of outward adminiſtration in the viſible church, which have been altered as was moſt ſuitable to the ſtate of the church, and the wiſe deſigns of God in the different periods of time ſince the church was formed. In his third remark he undertakes to ſhew what we are to underſtand by the different diſpenſations of the covenant; to this effect: They are not different articles contained in the covenant itſelf, which has always been preciſely the ſame, but only different duties added to, and founded upon it, which become binding in conſequence of embracing it, and which are properly termed *appendages*. But we find nothing to ſupport any part of this aſſertion, no ſhadow of a reaſon for his ſuppoſing that no alteration has been made in reſpect of any articles of the covenant. Nor has he ſhewn that thoſe duties and grants which, he ſays are not parts or articles, but appendages of the covenant, are not as properly articles of the covenant, as the promiſe of ſalvation through faith in the mediator. It depends *wholly* on his own arbitrary and defective definition of the covenant, [which has nothing to ſupport it but his own good pleaſure, as has been noted.] And when he ſays that theſe ſuppoſed additional duties are binding in conſequence of embracing the covenant; if he means that they are immediately bind-

ing on thoſe only who are in covenant, being as he elſewhere terms them "covenant duties," we readily conſent to it, and think that being covenant duties, they are duties enjoined in the covenant, as was ſaid. But if he means, that they are duties binding only on true believers, who have cordially embraced the covenant, and ſo are entitled to the promiſe of ſalvation, this is only begging the main queſtion. Nor does his quotation from the *Diſcourſe* favor this his notion—That ſome who are not ſaints in heart are intereſted in the covenant, and under its bond, has been proved before.

His fourth remark is, "there is no propriety in arguing from one diſpenſation of the covenant of grace to another." I grant we cannot argue that the peculiarities of one diſpenſation belong to another. But as to ſuch ordinances as are deſigned to be ſtanding and perpetual, we may argue from one diſpenſation to another. So the apoſtle argues the right of goſpel miniſters to a maintenance from that ordinance of the law of Moſes, that they who miniſter at the altar ſhould live of the things of the altar. However, it is a falſe aſſertion of Mr. E. that "I have endeavored to prove what the peculiar duties of believers are under the preſent diſpenſation of the covenant of grace, from what they were under the former diſpenſation." I purpoſely waved arguments from this topic, though I think they might be urged to advantage. Nor does he point to any inſtance of ſuch arguing; though we ſhall ſee that he has argued in the ſame manner himſelf, which he here blames in others.

I have now ſurveyed the main principles on which Mr. E. builds the theory he has ſet up in oppoſition to that exhibited in the *Diſcourſe on the Church*. It ſeems to be a mere caſtle in the air, having nothing to ſupport it, that we can ſee, but the breath of his own mouth. And after all, if we ſhould allow him the principles which he wiſhes to eſtabliſh, they would be of little ſervice to him; but the doctrine which he moſt oppoſes might be defended notwithſtanding.

CHAPTER III.

IN the next chapter he endeavors to maintain that "None but real ſaints, that is, true believers, are in the covenant of grace." And he ſays truly, that I ſuppoſe that not only true believers, but all who are baptized (if not cut off) are in ſome ſenſe,

in the covenant of grace. And this muſt be allowed, if they are members of the church, which has been aſſerted by all who acknowledge the baptiſm-right of infants. But he ſays, "If we have given a juſt definition of the covenant of grace, then none can be in it but true believers." And then we ſay, none are guilty of breaking the covenant but true believers. And the Jews were not broken off by unbelief from that covenant and church into which the Gentiles were ingrafted. But what if his definition be not juſt, but erroneous and defective? Then it ſeems his poſition is only an appendage of that phantom of his imagination which we have juſt been ſurveying, and may go with it, to build itſelf a houſe in the land of Shinar.

CHAPTER IV.

AN attempt to prove that true ſaints only ought to profeſs religion occupies his next chapter; a point doubtleſs of importance in the preſent diſpute. Indeed the whole cauſe will perhaps turn upon it.

That it is the duty of chriſtians to profeſs their religion is taken for granted. And I cannot but approve the practice of our churches, in admitting members to full communion upon their making a public profeſſion of chriſtianity, though the compilers of the *platform* did not hold ſuch an expreſs public manner of profeſſion to be abſolutely neceſſary by divine inſtitution. They conceived that "the ſubſtance of what is required is kept, where there is a real agreement and conſent of a company of faithful perſons to meet conſtantly together in one congregration for the public worſhip of God, and their mutual edification; which real agreement and conſent they do expreſs by their conſtant practice, in coming together for the public worſhip of God, and by their religious ſubjection to the ordinances of God there." But whatever mode of profeſſion may be thought needful or moſt proper, the diſciples of Chriſt are bound to confeſs him before men, if they hope to be owned by him before the angels of God.

But the queſtion is, whether any who are not true ſaints may or ought to profeſs the chriſtian religion. If they may not, they may not come to that ordinance, in which ſuch a profeſſion is ſolemnly made. If they may, it will go far towards

proving that ſome ſuch may have a warrant, and be bound to come.

The queſtion is not, whether ſuch may profeſs religion, who find that they cannot profeſs in ſincerity, but whether, ſuch may and ought to profeſs who find that they can do it ſeriouſly and ſincerely, ſo far as they know themſelves, though they are not ſatisfied that they have been ſavingly converted to God, and though it ſhould be ſuppoſed that this may be really the caſe with ſome of them.

Again, the queſtion is not, whether thoſe may and ought to profeſs that their faith is ſaving who doubt or diſbelieve the truth thereof; but whether, ſuch may not declare what their religious views, diſpoſitions, deſires, and reſolutions are, ſo far as they know themſelves.

So that the ſubject of our preſent conſideration lies in theſe two enquiries, whether thoſe, who, after ſerious examination, find that, ſo far as they are conſcious, they do ſincerely believe the goſpel, and approve and conſent to the covenant of grace therein propoſed, may and ought ſo to profeſs, though they ſhould ſo far doubt of, or diſbelieve their being the ſubjects of ſanctifying grace, that they dare not profeſs that their faith and religion are ſaving?

2. Whether it be not ſuppoſeable, and credible, that ſome who can ſo profeſs are not ſaints in heart? Now I conceive that both theſe queſtions may be reſolved in the affirmative.

1. They who can profeſs religion ſincerely, ſo far as they know, or are conſcious, may and ought to profeſs, whatever doubts they may have whether their faith be ſaving. This I believe, is agreeable to the common ſenſe of chriſtians. Indeed it ſeems to carry its own evidence with it, ſo much, that it is not eaſy to find any thing more acknowledged by which to prove it. But let it be conſidered.

Firſt. It has never been proved that men are forbidden to profeſs religion, unleſs they were graciouſly ſincere. The *wicked*, who are reproved in Pſalm l. 16, for declaring God's ſtatutes, and taking his covenant into their mouth, appear to have been ſuch as were *manifeſtly wicked*, ſo that they could not but be conſcious of it; beſides that the words are underſtood by good expoſitors as pointing eſpecially to teachers of religion; who were groſsly and ſcandalouſly wicked.

We find further, that when men did appear to profeſs religion ſeriouſly and in integrity, according to their preſent light, they were not blamed for ſo doing; though they afterwards gave evidence that they were not ſaints in heart. Nay,

God expreſſes his approbation of the profeſſion of religion which the Iſraelites made at mount Sinai. Deut. v. 28. "They have well ſaid (in the Hebrew it is, they have done well) all that they have ſpoken." And yet the next words plainly ſhew that it was not thus ſpoken from a preſumption or expectation (if I may ſo ſpeak) that they would all ſhew they had a heart to fulfil their covenant engagements. "O that there were ſuch an heart in them that they might fear me, and keep my commandments."

Nor do we find that Chriſt, or his apoſtles, ever forbade, or diſcouraged any from making a profeſſion of their believing on him, or were cautious of admitting them into the number of profeſſed diſciples; though multitudes were not true believers. It ſeems that the number of Chriſt's diſciples was ſo great, that the Phariſees heard that he made and baptized more diſciples than John. And in what great numbers they joined to the church upon the preaching of the apoſtles, the hiſtory of the church in the New Teſtament informs us; nor do we find that any were diſcouraged or refuſed, who offered themſelves; or that any are blamed for having too raſhly and haſtily made profeſſion of their faith; not even when they were afterwards rejected as ſcandalous. If thoſe who are ſo induſtrious in throwing ſtumbling blocks and ſcruples in the way of ſerious chriſtians, who but for religious ſcruples would moſt freely and gladly profeſs their faith, and join in communion with the church, if they can find any rule or example in the ſcriptures, which gives any countenance to them, let them produce it, and it ſhall be attended to.

Since it is confeſſedly the duty of believers to profeſs their faith, they who find credible evidence in themſelves, that they are believers, may and ought to profeſs accordingly. And they who are conſcious that, ſo far as they know themſelves, they do heartily aſſent and conſent to the goſpel, are conſcious that they are believers in ſome ſenſe; and have ſuch evidence that they are true believers, as makes it their duty to be profeſſors; if ſome who doubt whether they are true believers may and ought to profeſs their faith, as all allow, then ſuch evidences as leave it uncertain whether a man be a true believer, may ſatisfy him that he may and ought to be a profeſſor.

No one may profeſs religion who doubts whether he may or ought to do it. He who doubts of this cannot act in faith, and whatſoever is not of faith is ſin. See Dr. Ames' Caſes of Conſcience, book I. Chap. V. Now ſince God only knows whether a doubting chriſtian is a true believer, and ſince ſome doubt-

ing chriſtians may and ought to profeſs their faith, the unavoidable conſequence is, that ſome may and ought to profeſs religion, and may have a good and ſure warrant to do ſo in their own conſcience, when rightly informed, while it is known to God only, whether their religion be ſaving; and if it be granted, that any may and ought to profeſs religion whoſe ſincerity is doubtful, it can never be proved that ſincere chriſtians only may and ought to profeſs.

The ſecond queſtion therefore is eaſily reſolved: For it is evidently poſſible, ſuppoſeable and credible, that, of thoſe whoſe ſincerity is doubtful, ſome may not be ſincere chriſtians. And if any of thoſe doubtful characters, who yet may and ought to profeſs religion, ſhould prove not to be ſincere chriſtians, the plain conſequence will be, that ſome who are not true ſaints, may and ought to profeſs religion. So that they who maintain that, true ſaints only may and ought to be profeſſors, and yet grant that ſome who are not known to be true ſaints by themſelves or others, may and ought to profeſs religion, ſeem inconſiſtent.

And how ſtrange an aſſertion is it to ſay, that no man may or ought to expreſs his religious ſentiments and views, till he is ſure that he is a ſubject of ſaving grace. And yet this is implied in the impleaded notion. For what is expreſſing our religious ſentiments, but profeſſing our religion?

It is not neceſſary that we find an expreſs precept requiring graceleſs perſons, as ſuch, to profeſs religion. It is ſufficient to eſtabliſh any point in the judgment of reaſonable men, if it may fairly be inferred from what the ſcriptures have taught, and from thoſe principles in which all chriſtians are agreed, the denial of which would be attended with conſequences not to be endured.

But Mr. E. endeavors to maintain that true ſaints only may and ought to profeſs religion, which he argues,

1. Becauſe profeſſion of religion is not a moral but inſtituted duty enjoined only on true ſaints. Anſwer. Though we admit the diſtinction between the duties of natural and inſtituted worſhip, yet profeſſion of religion ſeems to be properly a duty of natural worſhip, and not a mere poſitive inſtitution. The light of nature teaches the fitneſs of it. Though it is granted that profeſſing religion, in any particular mode, inſtituted by God, ſuch as ſacrificing to him, receiving the Lord's ſupper, or the like, is a duty of poſitive inſtitution. But not to inſiſt on this. Suppoſe profeſſion of religion to be an inſtituted duty, this proves not that true ſaints only may and ought to profeſs. Keep-

ing the Lord's day, the public worſhip of God, are inſtituted duties; and yet others, beſides true ſaints, may and ought to attend religiouſly to theſe divine inſtitutions. But profeſſing religion, it is ſaid, is the duty of true ſaints only. Anſwer. This is the point to be proved, ſo it ought not to be begged. Beſides, if ſome who doubt of their own ſincerity may and ought to profeſs religion, as all allow, then this is confeſſedly the right and duty of ſome who are not known to be ſaints in heart. And then it can never be proved that true ſaints only may and ought to be profeſſors of religion. Mr. E. further argues, "So long as any neglect to comply with the covenant, they are not required to profeſs that they have complied." Anſwer. It is not required of any one to profeſs that he has complied ſavingly with the covenant of grace, and if one ſhould ſo profeſs, it would not be a credible profeſſion of religion; and it is confeſſedly the right and duty of ſome to profeſs religion, who do not and cannot profeſs they have ſavingly complied with the covenant, as has been obſerved. But "If God ſhould require men to profeſs religion before they have it, he would require them to profeſs a falſehood." Anſwer. None are required to profeſs religion before they have it, and are conſcious that they have it. But all religion is not ſaving religion. Many who have no doubt but that they have ſome kind of faith and religion have great doubts whether their faith and religion be ſaving. But whoever finds that he does heartily aſſent to, approve and acquieſce in the goſpel, ſo far as he underſtands it, and knows his own heart, may and ought to profeſs. Nor does he in ſo doing profeſs a lie or falſehood. For while a man ſpeaks in veracity or moral ſincerity he does not lie. And his profeſſion in the ſenſe by him intended is not falſe, being by the ſuppoſition an honeſt expreſſion of his own apprehenſions, and not an aſſertion that his apprehenſions are agreeable to the truth of the goſpel, or the effect of ſaving illuminations and influences of the ſpirit of God. And though profeſſion of faith, does indeed preſuppoſe faith of ſome kind, as is expreſſed in the words ſo often quoted by Mr. E. yet it does not neceſſarily ſuppoſe *ſaving faith*, nor was any ſuch ideas expreſſed or meant.

Upon the whole, that profeſſion of faith, which he contends for, conſiſting in a profeſſing that I am a true believer, agrees well with that notion of faith which implies a believing that I am a true believer, and ſhould be incorporated into that ſyſtem.

If Philip required the Eunuch to profeſs ſaving faith, as Mr. Emmons ſays, yet he did not require him to profeſs that his faith was ſaving, or that he believed he was a godly man; and

he readily baptized him upon his saying, he believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If he will admit all into his church, who make the same profession, he will take as "large a stride towards catholicism," as most among us.

It has been thought, by some, that such a brief and general profession of faith in Christ might be a sufficient ground of charity, when the church was under persecution, and a man's owning himself to be a christian was an act of great self-denial, exposing him to the hatred of the world, and the loss of all things. But it is far otherwise, where a profession of christianity is for a man's advantage and honor. The example of the apostles in admitting members into the church on such general professions, is not, therefore, to be followed, when the outward state of the church is so different, but a very strict examination of proponants is now become necessary; and a full, particular and punctual relation of a work of sanctifying grace should be exhibited, to render one an object of charity.

But though a profession of christianity is a greater evidence of grace, when it is an act of self-denial, than when it is not; and it is likely that the church is never more pure than when it is oppressed and persecuted, yet I find not but that the apostles observed the same rule in admitting into the communion of the church, when it enjoyed outward peace, and when they were most favored by the people, as when they were persecuted: And in particular when three thousand were admitted in one day, it appears not that the people discovered any disposition to persecute them; but it is said that they continued daily with one accord in the temple, the most public place of resort, praising God, *and having favor with all the people.* Now if the apostles made no difference in their terms of admission in times of peace, and in times of persecution, and were no more severe in examining professors at one time than another, and have given no rule or instruction to the churches to make any such difference, why should we? I know people will find plausible reasons and pretences for what they do, when they depart from the rules and practice of the apostles: but, if this is once allowed, no one knows where it will stop. The scribes and pharisees thought that Christ was not strict enough in keeping his distance from sinners. But Christ called their strictness and religious grimace, hypocrisy. And I suppose christian pharisaism is not much better than Jewish.

CHAPTER V.

IN the next chapter we have Mr. E's deſcription of viſible ſaints. He ſays, "It is a given point, that all viſible ſaints are proper ſubjects of ſpecial ordinances." If ſo, then ſome graceleſs perſons are proper ſubjects of ſpecial ordinances; and certainly all proper ſubjects have a right of admiſſion and acceſs to them. That ſome viſible ſaints are graceleſs, is evident from ſcripture, acknowledged by all, even by Mr. E. who ſays, Judas was a viſible ſaint before he betrayed Chriſt, page 51. And yet we find him inconſiſtently arguing againſt this his *given point*, and endeavoring to prove, by various arguments, that *true ſaints only* are proper ſubjects of ſpecial ordinances.

He then gives us ſome of his *Strictures* on the following words quoted from the *Diſcourſe:* "It is external and not internal holineſs which forms the character of a viſible ſaint, as ſuch," or makes one a viſible ſaint. And again, "It muſt be the viſibility of that holineſs which is viſible, that is, of external holineſs, which denominates a viſible ſaint." This I ſhould think is undeniable, if nothing is viſible in another but what is external. And that inward holineſs or grace in the heart is not viſible, in the ſenſe here intended, is acknowledged by all, except thoſe who pretend to a certain knowledge of the ſpiritual ſtate of others. To this purpoſe ſpeaks Preſident Edwards, "Though true ſaints know experimentally what true religion is in the internal exerciſes of it, yet theſe are what they can neither feel nor ſee in the heart of another. There is nothing in others that comes within their view but outward manifeſtations and appearances." So that, according to him, there is nothing which we can diſcern, or have a view of in another, but what is outward; indeed we ſometimes ſpeak of grace as viſible *in an improper ſenſe*, by means of outward ſigns and expreſſions, as was particularly obſerved in the *Diſcourſe*. But nothing is *really* and *properly* viſible or diſcernable but outward, uncertain ſigns, which give us no aſſurance what a man's inward character and ſtate is; but theſe outward and viſible ſigns are *viſible holineſs*; and the perſon in whom they are found is *a real outward ſaint*; and his outward holineſs is alſo a credible ſign, though but an uncertain one, that he is an inward ſaint. So that though outward holineſs, or ſigns of grace, be a real diſcernable qualification, yet as it has no known, certain connection with grace in

the heart, it cannot help us certainly to diſcern grace in another. At moſt we can only ſee that it is *probable*; ſo that ſigns of grace do not make grace itſelf viſible or diſcernable *properly*, but only in an *improper* ſenſe, as has been ſaid.

We do not ſay, as Mr. E. abſurdly repreſents, that "a viſible ſaint is only a reſemblance of a real ſaint." We ſay that *he is a real ſaint* in his kind; as much ſo as an outward Jew, and the outward circumciſion were real in their kind. There is another kind of holineſs ſpoken of in ſcripture, beſides that of the heart, to which he would fain confine the meaning of the word. Though outward viſible holineſs is a ſign of grace, yet it is not grace itſelf, but diſtinct from it. He whoſe profeſſion and outward behavior reſembles that of a true ſaint, is undoubtedly a viſible ſaint; and has every thing which is included in Mr. E's *deſcription*. He ſays, "Viſible ſaints are thoſe who appear to profeſs real holineſs." If he means, that they are thoſe whoſe profeſſion expreſſes the faith and virtues of true chriſtianity; I have no other objection, but that it allows not infants to be viſible ſaints; if he means, that it is neceſſary for one to profeſs that he is a ſaint in heart, that his faith is ſaving, and his religious exerciſes and experiences are gracious; this he has not proved: nor do I find any thing in ſcripture which gives the leaſt countenance to this notion. If he means that one is not a viſible ſaint, unleſs he *appears*, or *is judged* to be a true ſaint, this is yet more abſurd; for then it is the eye or judgment of the church, and not a profeſſion of godlineſs, or any thing elſe in a proponant, which makes him a viſible ſaint: and the ſame man, may, at the ſame time, be, and not be, a viſible ſaint; and ſo may have, and not have, a right of admiſſion, according as others may differ in their apprehenſions or judgment of him. But of this, more hereafter.

Again, if a profeſſion of real holineſs, or "the appearance of ſuch a profeſſion," as Mr. E. ſpeaks, makes one a viſible ſaint, this is as much external, and as diſtinct from grace in the heart, as any thing which can be ſeen with the bodily eyes.

Upon the whole, Mr. E. blunders ſo ſtrangely about his meaning, that it is hard to determine what he would have. Viſible ſaints are thoſe, according to him, in whom ſomething appears which is inviſible, as grace in the heart is acknowledged to be. Or if grace be ſuppoſed to be viſible, in *ſome ſenſe*, it is not any ſign of grace, exhibited or diſcerned, which makes one a viſible ſaint, but it is the favorable judgment and belief of the church. Let a man's profeſſion and practice be ever ſo

contrary to the gospel, if a church believes he is a true saint, he is then, it seems, a visible saint, and a proper subject of special ordinances; but if he should exhibit ever so *good a life, and creed, and profession*, yet unless the church should believe him to be a true saint, he would not be a visible saint; and would have no right of admission. Was ever man more bewildered.

When he says that "for a man to appear to be a real saint, is precisely the same as to be a visible saint;" if he means that a visible saint is one in whom *signs* of *grace appear*, we say the same; and these apparent signs of grace are *visible or outward holiness*, and form a real character. But if he means that to be a visible saint is the same thing as to be *viewed* and *believed* to be a true saint, this is absurd, as has been shewn: a man may certainly appear to be a visible saint, according to Mr. E.'s definition, while yet he is not believed to be a saint in heart. He may be one whose *life* and *creed* and *profession* are unexceptionable, and yet some may uncharitably surmise that he is a hypocrite; while Judas's profession and outward behavior appeared unexceptionable, he was a visible saint in the view of Christ; though he did not think him sincere, but knew that his heart was not right.

CHAPTER VI.

AND now the airy castle, of which we have been taking a view, is about to play off its artillery. If the balloon, or to use Mr. E's metaphor, "*the bubble should burst*," the engineer is like to be in danger. But we hope he will escape, though his work perish.

He states the question, which is to be discussed in this chapter, in the following words: "Whether a church may admit any to communion but those who appear to be real saints," that is, saints in heart.

That we may rightly understand this question, which seems to be expressed ambiguously, I will endeavor to represent, as plainly and precisely as I can, the several senses in which it may be taken; and then give a distinct answer to each of them.

If the meaning of the question be, whether a church may or ought to admit any but such as exhibit or hold forth to their view signs or evidences of grace, it is expressly declared in

the *Diſcourſe on the Church*, that none may or ought to be admitted but viſible ſaints, who exhibit ſuch evidence of grace, that, according to the goſpel rule, by which a church ought to judge of profeſſors, they ought to be held, reputed, and regarded as true ſaints in a judgment of charity.

If the meaning be, whether a church may or ought to admit a proponant, unleſs the evidences of grace, which he exhibits, *appear to them*, or be diſcerned by them: I anſwer again. They may not. But if a church, through prejudice, will not hear or attend to what a profeſſor has to offer, and ſo are wilfully ignorant of it, they ought not to admit him while thus ignorant: But their wilful ignorance is no excuſe for their refuſing to do that, which they are bound to do, according to the rule of the goſpel. Their ſinful incapacity does not diſcharge them from their obligation, or nullify the right of a viſible ſaint to the privilege which Chriſt has granted to him.

If the queſtion be, whether in caſe a proponant exhibits, and the church diſcerns, ſuch evidence of grace, as according to the rule of the goſpel is, and ought to be judged ſufficient to entitle him to their charity and the privilege of admiſſion to communion, but the church erroneouſly judges that it is not ſufficient, and that he ought not to be admitted upon it; whether a church, I ſay, while this is their apprehenſion and judgment, may and ought to admit ſuch a one to communion? I anſwer. Such a proponant ought to be admitted; and it is the duty of the church to admit him, according to the rule of the goſpel: and yet they may and ought not to act contrary to the light and dictates of their own conſcience; ſo that till their error be corrected, and the conſcience dictate agreeably to the rule of the goſpel, they muſt unavoidably either act contrary to the law of Chriſt, or the dictate of their own conſcience, both of which are forbidden. And they can no otherwiſe eſcape from the ſnare in which they are entangled, than by correcting their judgment according to the word of God, and ſo conſcienciouſly complying with the duty therein required.

But if the meaning of the queſtion be, Whether, in caſe one ſhould exhibit, and the church ſhould diſcern all that *evidence of grace*, which is required according to the rule of the goſpel to give a right of admiſſion; and a church has nothing to object againſt his profeſſion, or his life, for which he ought to be debarred; and yet they do not believe that he is a true ſaint; whether they ought to receive ſuch a profeſſor to communion? This, as I conceive, is the point upon which Mr. E. and I dif-

fer. He ſays, "they muſt admit thoſe, and only thoſe, to communion whom [who] they *think are real ſaints.*" "They muſt have evidence enough *to convince them*, that the man whom they admit is more likely to be a true believer, than a falſe profeſſor." So that whatever evidence of grace may be exhibited to, and diſcerned by the church; though a man's *life* and *creed* and *profeſſion* appear to them ever ſo good and unexceptionable, yet if through uncharitableneſs, evil ſurmiſings, or any other cauſe, they *do not think* that he is really and certainly a ſaint in heart; at leaſt if they do not believe that this is moſt probable, they may not receive him. "They muſt admit none to communion but ſuch as they *judge to be real ſaints.*" p. 101. "The church ought to admit none to communion but ſuch as they *as much believe* are real, as viſible ſaints." p. 98.

So that, according to him, it is not the evidence or ſigns of grace exhibited to and diſcerned by the church, which makes one a viſible ſaint, and gives him a right of admiſſion; but it is the church's *believing that he is a true ſaint*, and that theſe ſigns of grace are really and certainly connected with grace in the heart, which makes it the duty of a church to receive a profeſſor.

On the contrary, we maintain that it is the evidence of grace diſcerned, and not the truth of grace believed by a church, which warrants and obliges them to receive a proponant to communion. If his profeſſion and converſation appear unexceptionable, ſo that nothing is found in him for which the goſpel rule would debar him, the church may and ought to receive him as a true ſaint in a judgment of charity, whether they do really and poſitively believe it to be certain, or moſt probable that he is a true ſaint, or not.

But before we proceed any farther, I would premiſe two obſervations, which may further open the point in diſpute.

1. That we may hold and receive one as a true ſaint in a judgment of charity, of whom we have not ſuch evidence as will oblige us to determine, abſolutely, whether he be certainly, or moſt probably a ſaint in heart. For the judgment of charity is formed according to the rule which is given to the church, to diſtinguiſh thoſe whom they are to admit to communion, from thoſe who are to be refuſed. According to this rule, profeſſors of true religion, who are not ſcandalous, are all viſible ſaints, and to be received and held for true ſaints in a judgment of charity. And yet the ſcriptures aſſure us, that many of theſe, and no one knows how many, are not ſincere. So that after it

appears ever ſo plain that men's lives, and creed, and profeſſion are good, and conſequently that they are viſible ſaints, we know not whether one half of them are ſincere. And if we abſolutely believe that each one is a true ſaint, it is as abſurd and unreaſonable, as if we ſhould abſolutely believe that each ticket in a lottery will draw a prize; or that the firſt, ſecond, third numbers, &c. will be prizes, though we know that there will be many blanks: For a man's being a viſible ſaint, and ſo a proper object of chriſtian charity, makes it no more certain that he is a ſaint in heart, than his having a ticket makes it certain that it will be a prize. Men may be as pert and poſitive as they pleaſe in their aſſertions, but unleſs they can prove that all, or at leaſt the greater part of viſible ſaints, who are to be received as true ſaints in a judgment of charity, are alſo really ſaints in heart, they will never perſuade reaſonable men, who ground their belief only on ſufficient evidence, that none may be received to the communion and charity of a church, but thoſe who they have reaſon to *think* or *believe abſolutely* are certainly, or at leaſt moſt probably true ſaints.

This diſtinction between the judgment of charity, and an abſolute belief of the good eſtate of profeſſors, is plainly intimated by ſundry of our approved divines. Thus Mr. Shepard diſtinguiſhes between *church charity*, and *experimental charity*, as he phraſes it. Meaning by the former, that hope, which we ought to have concerning profeſſors in general, and their children; and by the latter, that more confident perſuaſion, we may have of the ſincerity of ſome, who adorn their profeſſion in a peculiar manner. So Mr. Edwards diſtinguiſhes between the *public* and *private* judgment. And he plainly holds, that men, whoſe profeſſion and converſation are unexceptionable, are to be regarded as objects of public charity, whatever ſuſpicions or fears any may entertain from what they have obſerved. And the apoſtle acknowledged profeſſed chriſtians as ſaints and faithful brethren in Chriſt, that is, in a judgment of charity. And yet he expreſſes ſuch doubts and fears concerning many of them, and taxes them with ſuch groſs errors and diſorders, and tells them that he was afraid he had beſtowed upon them labor in vain, that it ſeems unreaſonable to ſuppoſe he abſolutely thought and believed that it was certainly true, or moſt probable they were all true ſaints in heart. In ſhort, if we are required thus to believe of all viſible ſaints, then we muſt have ſufficient evidence that all or the greater part of viſible ſaints are ſincere:

And when this is made to appear, we ſhall moſt willingly admit the conſequences.

2. The other obſervation which I would premiſe is, though we ought to have charity for all credible profeſſors, yet it is not our charity which makes it our duty to receive them. But, as ſoon as it appears that they are unexceptionable profeſſors, it is our immediate or next duty to receive them, and hold them for true believers in a judgment of charity. If we did think one to be a believer who is not a profeſſor, we ought not to receive him but on a profeſſion of religion. And if one makes an unexceptionable profeſſion of religion, as ſoon as this appears, we may and ought to receive him, whatever we may fear, or ſuſpect, or believe concerning his ſtate. If one ſhould think (though I know not what warrant we have ſo to think) that the greater part of unexceptionable profeſſors are graceleſs, and therefore ſhould not think it more probable that a profeſſor is a true ſaint, though his *life*, his *creed* and *profeſſion* appear to be good, and ſo he is plainly a viſible ſaint; or if we have uncharitable ſurmiſes concerning one for which we can give no good reaſon, it is ſtill our duty to receive ſuch a profeſſor. Nor need we wait till we have worked ourſelves up to an abſolute belief that he is ſincere. We ought to have charity for him, and to check uncharitable thoughts. But ſtill, though our charity ſhould be ever ſo cold, yet, if we find that he profeſſes the true religion, and is not ſcandalous, he is a viſible ſaint, his right of admiſſion is plain and certain. Our charitable judgment of him, and regard for him is now our duty; but our warrant, and obligation to receive him is complete and plain without it.

Having thus endeavored to unbowel and lay open as diſtinctly as I could the true and preciſe point in debate, we have reduced it to this queſtion: Whether it be evidence of grace manifeſted, and diſcerned in a profeſſion of true religion, not overthrown by a ſcandalous life, or the reality of grace believed, as certain, or at leaſt moſt probable, which warrants and obliges a church to receive a candidate to full communion. Mr. Emmons, we have ſeen, maintains the latter, and we the former—And

Firſt. It appears not from ſcripture, or any good reaſon, that none may or ought to be admitted, unleſs thoſe who admit them abſolutely think and believe that they are certainly, or at leaſt, moſt probably ſaints in heart. Mr. E. has indeed offered ſeveral arguments to prove this. But we ſhall ſhew preſently that he has failed in his attempt.

Secondly. We may argue from his own principle. He grants that "all viſible ſaints are ſubjects of ſpecial ordinances," and that all whoſe *life* and *creed* and *profeſſion* appear to be good, are viſible ſaints. Therefore all ſuch are proper ſubjects of goſpel ordinances, and ſo may and ought to be admitted. But though thoſe in whom theſe ſigns of grace appear ought to be held for true ſaints in a judgment of charity; yet it has never been proved that theſe ſigns, which make it certain that the perſon in whom they appear as a viſible ſaint, and a proper ſubject of ſpecial ordinances, make it alſo certain, or at leaſt moſt probable, that he is a ſaint in heart. It is certain from ſcripture that many viſible ſaints are graceleſs. It is not certain but that the greater part may be ſo. If then we abſolutely believe one to be certainly, or moſt probably a true ſaint, merely becauſe he appears a viſible ſaint; our belief cannot be ſupported by ſcripture. And ſuch a belief is not required of us as duty; and much leſs is it neceſſary to give us a right or warrant to admit a viſible ſaint, whoſe *life*, *creed*, and *profeſſion* appear to be good, to a privilege which confeſſedly belongs to him as a proper ſubject.

Thirdly. A church may and ought to admit all who appear to be profeſſors of true religion, and not ſcandalous. But ſome who appear to be profeſſors of true religion, and not ſcandalous may not appear, or *be believed*, to be ſaints in heart, through uncharitable ſurmiſes. And yet, notwithſtanding their uncharitable ſurmiſes, the church may have no objection of weight againſt their *life*, or *creed*, or *profeſſion*. Some may not believe the ſincerity of an unexceptionable profeſſor to be certain, or moſt probable, from an opinion that but a ſmall part of credible profeſſors are ſincere, as has been obſerved; yet ſo long as a man's profeſſion appears ſound and unexceptionable, and no ſufficient bar to his admiſſion is found in him, the unfavorable opinion of a church, or any of its members, is no ſufficient reaſon for their refuſing to receive him. He is evidently a *viſible ſaint* whatever his heart may be, or whatever it may be ſuſpected, or thought. And the goſpel rule allows, and requires us to receive all ſuch.

Fourthly. We argue, that it is not the truth of grace believed, but the evidence of it exhibited, and appearing in an unexceptionable profeſſion, which gives a right of admiſſion, and is good warrant for receiving ſuch a profeſſor from examples in ſcripture. God himſelf did acknowledge the whole congregation of Iſrael as his holy and peculiar people, upon

their profeſſion of religious obedience, and owning the covenant; though he did not think their hearts were right, but knew that perhaps the greater part were a ſtiff necked, rebellious, crooked, and perverſe generation. But if any think we cannot argue from what God has done under the Old Teſtament, to what we may now do; I grant that we muſt obſerve our rule; but no ſuch rule has yet been found, as forbids us to receive any to communion, unleſs we verily think and believe they are true ſaints. And we have another example in the New Teſtament, which ſeems unexceptionable. And that is the example of Chriſt himſelf, whoſe life is propoſed as a pattern for his diſciples.

The man Jeſus received thoſe as diſciples, who profeſſed to believe on him, though he knew, by divine revelation, that many of them were not true, ſteadfaſt believers. And his example in this is inſtructive to us. It teaches us that we are to judge according to the rule of chriſtian charity, in determining who are to be received to outward fellowſhip. And that profeſſors of religion, who are not ſcandalous, are to be received, though we ſhould have a prevailing fear; nay, though it were revealed to us (as it was to Jeſus) that they are graceleſs.

Upon the whole, the terms of admiſſion are, I conceive, of divine inſtitution; that is viſible outward holineſs, or a profeſſion of religion; not ſuch a profeſſion, as ſhall make it certain, or actually ſatisfy a church, that the profeſſor is a ſaint in heart, but ſuch as *ought to ſatisfy* them that he is a viſible ſaint, and ſo a proper object of chriſtian charity. Having premiſed this, I ſhall now proceed to a more particular examination of Mr. E's arguments.

It is to be remembered the queſtion is, whether any ought to be admitted into the viſible church, but thoſe whom the church abſolutely thinks, and believes are certainly, or at leaſt moſt probably, true ſaints in heart. Mr. E. maintains the negative, by the following arguments:

Argument 1. "None ought to be admittted into the viſible church, but ſuch as appear qualified to promote the end of its inſtitution."

If the meaning be, that none ought to be admitted, but ſuch as ſhew, to a judgment of charity, that they are qualified to promote the ends for which the viſible church is inſtituted, in this ſenſe we grant the truth of the *propoſition*.

But we deny the *aſſumption*, which is neceſſary to complete the argument, viz. They only, whom a church believes to be

certainly, or at leaſt moſt probably ſaints in heart, appear to a judgment of charity, qualified to promote the ends for which the viſible church is inſtituted.—For ſome may appear to a judgment, formed according to the goſpel rule of charity, qualified to promote the ends of the inſtituted church, who yet may not appear *to a church*, certainly, or moſt probably ſaints in heart.—Churches do not always judge according to the rule of charity. And if they did, we have no ſufficient reaſon, abſolutely to think and believe it certain or moſt probable, that all are true ſaints, who appear to a judgment of charity, qualified to anſwer the ends of the inſtituted church. For then we ſhould have ſufficient reaſon to believe abſolutely that all or at leaſt the greater part are true ſaints, who are viſible ſaints. All theſe are, in a judgment of charity, qualified to anſwer the ends of the inſtituted church. And yet ſince many, and perhaps the greater part are not true ſaints, we have no ſufficient reaſon to believe abſolutely of all, or of each one that he is certainly, or moſt probably a ſaint in heart.

Nor has Mr. Emmons proved that true ſaints, only are qualified to promote the ends of the inſtitution of viſible churches; much leſs has he proved, that they only whom a church believes to be certainly, or moſt probably true ſaints, appear to a judgment of charity qualified to promote theſe ends.

He mentions ſeveral ends for which he ſuppoſes the viſible church is inſtituted; and argues that true ſaints only are qualified to promote them. The firſt end he mentions is, "to diſtinguiſh the friends from the enemies of God."—Anſwer. This muſt be denied. For it was never intended that cloſe hypocrites, though enemies to God, ſhould be diſtinguiſhed from true ſaints in this world. Did God admit, or acknowledge the whole congregation of Iſrael, as members of his church to diſtinguiſh true ſaints from falſe profeſſion; when perhaps the greater part were graceleſs? Did Chriſt admit ſo many who were not true believers into the number of his diſciples to diſtinguiſh true believers from falſe profeſſors? And was it for that end, that churches are by the rule of the goſpel to admit all viſible ſaints, all profeſſors of true religion, who are not ſcandalous, though many ſuch are graceleſs? If the viſible church was inſtituted to diſtinguiſh true ſaints from ſinners, would Chriſt have given the keys of it to *men*, and appointed thoſe to keep the doors, who with all their care are likely to let in, no one can ſay, how many, who are not ſincere?—It was indeed one end of the inſtitution of viſible churches, to diſtin-

guiſh profeſſors of the true religion, from thoſe who profeſs it not. And this end may be anſwered, if profeſſors only are admitted, though it ſhould not be abſolutely believed of all and each that they are certainly or moſt probably true ſaints.

Another end mentioned by Mr. E. for which viſible churches are inſtituted is, "to diſplay the beauty, and importance of religion." And is not this end well promoted by all profeſſors of chriſtianity who are of orderly converſation? It is by outward holineſs only that chriſtians ſhine as lights in the world, whereby they honor and propagate among mankind the religion which they profeſs.

He aſks, "Are they (that is graceleſs perſons) qualified to be admitted to that holy ſociety, which requires all who belong to it to be friends to God, to his cauſe, and to each other?" He expreſsly has granted that "All viſible ſaints are proper ſubjects of ſpecial ordinances," and that ſome graceleſs perſons are viſible ſaints, and yet moſt inconſiſtently argues, that they are not qualified to be admitted into the church. I would, in my turn, propoſe a query or two. Is it not acknowledged by all, that profeſſors of true religion, who are not ſcandalous, or that thoſe whoſe *life* and *creed*, and *profeſſion are good*, have a right of admiſſion, though many ſuch are not true ſaints? And have any a right of admiſſion who are not qualified to be admitted? Again, has not God himſelf, and Chriſt, and the apoſtles admitted ſome who were not true ſaints? And did they admit any who were not qualified for admiſſion? He proceeds. "How can the church in faithfulneſs to God, and themſelves admit thoſe to their fellowſhip, whom [who] they verily think, according to the beſt evidence they are able to obtain, are perfect enemies to God, to religion, and to themſelves?" I anſwer, if they judge according to the rule of chriſtian charity, they will not verily think thus of any one in particular whoſe profeſſion is good, and who is not ſcandalous; though they ſhould not think verily that it is certain, or at leaſt moſt probable that he is a true ſaint. But if any ſhould judge ſo uncharitably and unwarrantably of a profeſſor how can they in duty and faithfulneſs to chriſt refuſe one whoſe profeſſion and life appear unexceptionable, and whom Chriſt has commanded them to receive in his name? Do they ſhew faithfulneſs to their Lord, who will not conduct themſelves according his rule, but their own evil ſurmiſes? Again, was not Chriſt faithful to God and his cauſe, when he admited ſo many into the number and fellowſhip of his diſciples, whom he did not verily think to be true believers,

but knew the contrary; and when he gave churches ſuch a rule, and appionted ſuch to keep its doors as he knew would, and muſt admit very many falſe profeſſors? And though, as Mr. E. ſays, the church has the right of admitting, yet they have no right to ſwerve from the rule of the goſpel in their judgment or acts; and they are not allowed to judge others by any other rule, than that which requires them to hold all orderly profeſſors for true believers.

I have but one thing more to remark of this argument; and that is, if true ſaints only, are qualified for admiſſion, then where the rule of admiſſion is faithfully obſerved churches will be pure, conſiſting only of true believers. For the rule of admiſſion determines who are qualified for admiſſion. Whether Mr. Emmons favours thoſe who pretend to form pure churches or not, there are ſeveral paſſages in his book which favor ſtrongly of that notion. His quotation from Dr. Butler is no more to the purpoſe of his argument, than the Dr. was of his opinion.

His ſecond argument is grounded on this *propoſition:* "None ought to be admitted into the viſible church but thoſe who appear to be intereſted in the covenant of grace." Underſtand this of thoſe who are, and appear to be in the covenant of grace, as outwardly adminiſtered, and who appear alſo to a judgment of charity, to be intereſted in the ſaving grace, and bleſſings of the covenant: In this ſenſe the *propoſition* is granted—But,

We deny the *aſſumption* which is neceſſary to complete the argument, viz. Thoſe only whom the church abſolutely believes are certainly, or at leaſt, moſt probably, true ſaints, appear to be intereſted in the covenant of grace—For,

1. Some may appear to be intereſted in the covenant to thoſe who judge according to the goſpel rule of charity, whom a church may not believe to be intereſted in the covenant. Churches ſometimes do not judge according to the goſpel rule. In this caſe they ought to correct their judgment, and ſo admit thoſe to covenant privileges who appear, to a charitable judgment, to be entitled to them.

2. Some may appear to be intereſted in the covenant ſo as to be entitled to admiſſion to the privileges of outward communion with a church, and yet there may not be ſuch evidence of their being true ſaints, as will oblige a church to believe abſolutely that this is certain, or at leaſt moſt probable. Profeſſors of true religion with their children are intereſted in the covenant, and yet none can ſay how many of them are graceleſs. Mr. E's notion of the covenant as including only true believers is

without foundation, and has often been refuted. Whatever is built on this has no firm ſupport: And for men to aſſert that "none but real ſaints belong to the church in the ſight of God" (meaning the inſtituted church of which alone we are ſpeaking) that "to God who ſees the hearts of men, there is really but one church, which is compoſed of the ſubjects of his grace;" to aſſert this without any thing in the ſhape of a proof to ſupport it, and without touching one of the arguments to the contrary with one of their fingers ſeems ridiculouſly weak and abſurd. And in diſcourſing of *inſtituted churches* to ſhuffle and fly off to the *inviſible church*, and argue, that becauſe this is but one and compoſed only of true ſaints, therefore viſible churches, inſtituted and formed by God, are no churches in his ſight, any further than they are compoſed of true believers, is moſt impertinent; and, I may add inconſiſtent in thoſe who acknowledge viſible ſaints are the proper ſubjects of ſpecial ordinances, though many of them are graceleſs; and till ſomething appears to the contrary of more weight than mere unſupported aſſertions, I ſhall think the ſcriptures ſupport me in ſaying that there is a church of *profeſſors*, as well as a church of *believers*, and that both are viſible and real ſocieties, *in the ſight of God*, formed by him according to the rules of his covenant, as is more particularly repreſented in the *Diſcourſe on the Church*, and no anſwer has been made to it; but to proceed.

His third argument is grounded on this propoſition, "The ſcriptures repreſent the ſpirit of God as forming the materials of the viſible church." That is, "God converts ſinners in order to qualify them for admiſſion into his viſible church." And therefore none are properly qualified without his ſpecial grace. It is to be obſerved, that the qualification here inquired for is that which gives a *right of admiſſion*. It is needleſs to examine his ſcripture quotations: It is eaſy to ſee that they prove not that all are converted, who are ſo qualified as to have a right of admiſſion. For it is granted that all viſible ſaints, credible profeſſors, are ſo qualified as to have a right of admiſſion, though many of them are graceleſs. If no unregenerate men can be proper materials to compoſe the viſible church, then God himſelf, and Jeſus Chriſt formed the church of improper materials. For it is thought the greater part of thoſe whom God recognized as his peculiar people at Horeb, and whom Chriſt received as diſciples were unregenerate. And Chriſt has alſo left it as a ſtanding rule to his churches, to receive all profeſſed believers in his name, many

of whom are unregenerate, as has been obſerved. So that this argument proves too much, to be of any ſervice to Mr. E. unleſs he means to be advocate for thoſe who pretend to have churches compoſed only of true ſaints.

His fourth argument is grounded on this *propoſition*, "The viſible church from Adam to Chriſt was compoſed of thoſe who appeared to be real ſaints." I anſwer, ſo far as a profeſſion of true religion was an evidence of their being true ſaints, we grant that members of the Old Teſtament church might appear to be of this character. And this evidence we grant ſhould appear in all adult members of the chriſtian church. But this no more proves that none may be admitted members but ſuch as the church believes are certainly, or moſt probably true ſaints, than it proves that we ought verily to think thus of all members of the viſible church from Adam to Chriſt.

Though God declared his viſible church whom he brought out of Egypt a rebellious people, yet he did not reject or diſown them, or forbid them the uſe of his ordinances, but required their attendance upon them. Moſes does not ſpeak as if he believed the members of the viſible church to be all true ſaints, when he thus addreſſed them, Deut. xxix. 4. "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to ſee, and ears to hear, unto this day." See alſo, Deut. ix. 7, 24, what the character of the viſible church was afterwards, we may judge from the ſcripture hiſtory, and the writings of the prophets. If Mr. E. verily believes that they were generally true ſaints, and is willing to admit to communion thoſe who appear to be no better ſaints than a great part of the viſible church ſeems to have been from Adam to Chriſt, I think he takes "large ſtrides towards catholiciſm," and ſets the doors of the viſible church wider open than Mr. Stoddard.

We may here obſerve, that though he will not allow others to argue the qualifications for communion with the chriſtian church, from the qualifications of church members under the Old Teſtament; and repeatedly tells his readers, that I have uſed this weak argument, that this is our dernier reſort, &c. (though this argument is never once urged, nor mentioned in the *Diſcourſe on the Church*, as he repreſents, but was deſignedly waved) yet he is as ready as others to adopt the ſame argument, when he thinks it will ſerve his cauſe. I had thought, for ſome reaſons, not to have availed myſelf of what might be urged from this topic, if he had not by his example encouraged me to touch upon it.

His fifth and laſt argument is built on this propoſition, "The apoſtles admitted none into the church but thoſe who they ſuppoſed were true believers."

Anſwer 1. We are willing to grant that the apoſtles ſuppoſed all adult perſons whom they admitted to be true believers, *in a judgment of charity*. But this does not imply that they did *abſolutely believe* that all and each of thoſe whom they admitted were certainly, or moſt probably of this character. For the evidence of grace on which the judgment of charity is founded, and perſons were admitted into the church, being only a profeſſion of faith, the apoſtles were ſenſible that this was too uncertain, to ſupport ſuch an abſolute belief of the good eſtate of all and each of thoſe profeſſors. When they addreſs chriſtians as ſaints and faithful in Chriſt, they often ſeem to expreſs what Mr. Shepard calls *church charity*, hoping and preſuming on the ſincerity of their profeſſion, declaring their *public judgment* of them, as Mr. Edwards ſpeaks, that they were church members in good ſtanding, who are all in a judgment of charity, and in the public account of the church, received and reputed as true believers.

2. Sometimes the apoſtles appear to addreſs the better part of profeſſors more eſpecially, who had given higher evidence of their ſincerity, than an ordinary judgment of charity does or need to proceed upon in the admiſſion of church members. They ſpeak of them as eminent chriſtians, "filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, to the praiſe and glory of God." But thoſe who give lower and more doubtful evidence of ſincerity may have as unqueſtionable a right of admiſſion as any. If the apoſtles, in addreſſing the better part of profeſſors, expreſs a ſtrong confidence of their good eſtate, we cannot conclude, from this, that they had the ſame confidence with reſpect to all, as they had for ſome. Or that they had reaſon to have ſo much confidence in the ſincerity of any *when they were firſt admitted into the church*, before the ſincerity of their faith was manifeſted by its growth and good fruits. And if we read the epiſtles, and find what errors and irregularities ſome in the churches had fallen into, and what doubts, and jealouſies, and fears the apoſtles expreſs concerning ſome, calling them *fooliſh*, and *bewitched*, and *carnal*, *walking as men*, *not obeying the truth*, &c. we ſhall find that they did not think all the members of churches worthy of thoſe high commendations, and expreſſions of charity, which we ſometimes meet with.

3. Though we allow that the apoſtles did judge of the qualifications of profeſſors according to the rules of the goſpel, and had charity for all proper objects, and received them to their fellowſhip, yet we cannot ſo eaſily allow that churches always regulate their judgment, and exerciſe their charity as they ought. So that granting that the apoſtles admitted none but ſuch as they ſuppoſed were true ſaints in a judgment of charity, yet it is no juſt conſequence that *a church* may and ought not to admit any but ſuch as *appear to them* to be true ſaints; that is, as Mr. E. explains himſelf, ſuch as they *really and verily think* are certainly ſaints in heart, or at leaſt, that this is moſt probable. For our churches may not be ſo right and regular in their judgment, nor of ſo charitable a diſpoſition as the apoſtles. And beſides, there may be a judgment of charity in favor of a profeſſor, without ſuch an abſolute, and poſitive belief of his good eſtate.

There is no need of conſidering thoſe many texts of ſcripture which he has collected to prove that the apoſtles ſuppoſed profeſſors to be true believers. We allow, they received them as ſuch, in a judgment of charity. The diſpute is about the conſequence he draws from this fact. This he has not proved, but leaves it to ſhift for itſelf.

So that the point he undertook to maintain is ſo far from being "*abſolutely ſettled*" according to his mind, as he vainly pretends, that we find nothing of any ſtrength to ſupport it. If it is ſettled, it ſeems to be ſettled againſt him. Settled like a ſinking building for want of a good foundation.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW Mr. E. has ſucceeded in his attempt to prove that none but real ſaints ought to come to the Lord's ſupper is now to be examined.

The right of acceſs, which is now to be inquired into is, a warrant to profeſs chriſtianity, aſk admiſſion to the privileges of full communion with an inſtituted church, and, upon admiſſion, uſe theſe privileges. All and only thoſe have this right or warrant of acceſs, who have and diſcern ſuch qualifications as are a ſufficient reaſon for their coming, and which their own conſcience approves, or judges to be ſufficient. Therefore, no

qualifications which are not diſcerned, however real and important, can give one a right of acceſs. For nothing can be a reaſon of action to any one, or judged to be a good reaſon, while it is not diſcerned or known to be true. Whether grace be neceſſary or not, as a foundation of our warrant to come to the Lord's ſupper, it is no reaſon for coming in the view of conſcience, while it is not diſcerned; and ſo gives no warrant, no right to come any farther than the evidence of it is apprehended by us. It is ſomething which we find, and diſcern, and know, which gives us our right to act in this caſe.

If it be held that true ſaints only may and ought to come to the Lord's ſupper, then none may come who doubt whether they are true ſaints. For none may come, who doubt whether they may or ought to come; for in ſo doing, their own conſcience muſt condemn them for acting preſumptuouſly, and without a ſufficient reaſon in view. They cannot act in faith, while they doubt whether the action be lawful and warrantable. "And whatſoever is not of faith is ſin." God, and a rightly informed conſcience, allow us not to do what we doubt the lawfulneſs of doing.

But it is acknowledged by all, and ſo is *taken for granted*, that ſome who doubt whether they are true ſaints may and ought to profeſs chriſtianity, and come to the Lord's ſupper. Therefore ſome who *are not known to be true ſaints*, may have, and diſcern ſuch qualifications, as are a ſufficient reaſon, and warrant for their coming, and which they may juſtly account ſufficient.

Now if ſome who are not known to be true ſaints may and ought to come, and are bound in reaſon, in duty, and conſcience ſo to do, and ſo have a right of acceſs; it can never be *made to appear* that grace is neceſſary as a foundation for a warrant of acceſs. If ſuch evidences of grace, as make it only credible or probable, that a perſon is a true ſaint, may be ſufficient to ſatisfy him that he may and ought to come to the ſacrament, as having ſtronger reaſons for coming than refraining; and if it can never be proved that all who have ſuch credible or probable evidences of grace are true ſaints, then it cannot be proved but that ſome who are not true ſaints may have ſtronger reaſons for coming, and ſuch as may put it out of reaſonable doubt that they may and ought to come, and conſequently have a right of acceſs.

If any ſhould think that though true ſaints only have a ſure warrant and right of acceſs, yet a man may and ought to come

if he finds reaſon to hope and think it moſt probable that he is a true believer, though he has not aſſurance; I anſwer. To ſay a perſon *may come*, is exactly the ſame thing as to ſay it is *lawful* and *warrantable* for him to come. Now, if one who finds not certain, but probable evidence of grace *may come* to the Lord's ſupper, then uncertain evidence of grace gives a certain right of acceſs; and then *it cannot be maintained*, that true ſaints only have this right, unleſs it can be maintained, that *uncertain* evidence is *certain*, which is abſurd; or unleſs it be ſaid that a man *may* come, though it is *uncertain whether he may*, which is alſo abſurd.

Upon the whole, if probable evidence of grace be ſufficient to give a warrant of acceſs, as is granted by all; and if merely probable ſigns cannot be proved to have a certain connection with the truth of grace, or to be a certain evidence of it, then *it cannot be proved* that true ſaints only have a right of acceſs.

It is in vain to ſay that a chriſtian muſt find *good*, that is *ſure ſigns* of grace in himſelf, though he may doubt whether what he finds in himſelf be a ſure evidence of his being a true ſaint. For if the goodneſs of his warrant of acceſs depends on the goodneſs or certainty of his evidences, then a right conſcience will not approve it, or judge it ſufficient, or allow him to come to the Lord's ſupper, unleſs the goodneſs as well as the matter of his evidences be diſcerned; and when one diſcerns the reaſons of his hope to be good and ſure, he can no longer doubt of his good eſtate.

They who hold that grace is neceſſary, but aſſurance is not neceſſary, to give a right of acceſs, lay down a rule which can be of no uſe to direct one who doubts of his ſtate. Such a one muſt be as much in doubt whether he may attend ſpecial ordinances, as whether he is a true ſaint; if it be ſaid that he may come, if he has a prevailing hope, this is plainly giving up the point, and acknowledging that a graceleſs perſon may come, if he has, as no doubt many have a prevailing hope of their good eſtate. If it be ſaid that one may come, if he has good grounds of his hope, theſe good grounds, if they are ſuch as true ſaints only have, no doubting chriſtian can determine whether he can find in himſelf. But if the good grounds of our hope mean any thing which a graceleſs perſon may have, then a graceleſs perſon, if he finds in himſelf ſuch reaſons of hope, may have a ſufficient reaſon or warrant for acceſs. It might be added, that if a prevailing hope muſt be grounded on a greater probability of a perſon's being a true ſaint, it appears not how a doubting chriſtian

can know whether this be the caſe with himſelf; ſince no rule has yet been found by which this doubt can be reſolved.

So that when all is done and ſaid, this alternative will ſtill force itſelf upon us: Either none may or ought to come to the ſacrament but ſuch as have an aſſurance of hope, or it cannot be maintained that true ſaints only may and ought to come. They who aſſert that true ſaints only have a right of acceſs have, to their honor, diſowned the neceſſary conſequence of their principle; and choſen rather to run the hazard of being inconſiſtent, than deny that any doubting chriſtian may or ought to come to the Lord's ſupper; they have choſen to ſay that they *may* and *muſt* come, that is, have a *warrant* and are *bound* to do ſo, though upon their principle no one knows that they may or ought to come; and their doubting conſcience allows them not, but forbids their doing it upon their peril; Mr. E. indeed has a ſcheme of his own, different from all that I have ſeen, though not more conſiſtent. But as we find nothing of any ſtrength or ſolidity to ſupport it, the friends of truth have comfortable hopes, that it will ſoon be ſwept away, with other cobwebs of like ſtuff.

We ſhall accordingly now conſider his arguments to prove that true ſaints only may and ought to come to the ſacrament.

His firſt argument is to this effect. None ought to come to the Lord's table but thoſe who may and ought to make a profeſſion of religion. But true ſaints only may and ought a profeſſion of religion.

I anſwer. Though we grant that none have a right of acceſs but thoſe who may and ought to profeſs religion, yet we allow not, that true ſaints only may and ought to be profeſſors. Nor has Mr. E. proved this, nor can he, unleſs he can prove that none may profeſs religion, but thoſe who are aſſured of their own godly ſincerity, as has been ſhewn in conſidering his fourth chapter, whither the reader is referred for an anſwer to his arguings in ſupport of this his tenet; where alſo he may find ſome reaſons in ſupport of the contrary poſition. And though the belief of the heart is preſuppoſed in the profeſſion of the mouth, this does not imply that a *ſaving belief* muſt be preſuppoſed. And though profeſſion of faith goes before *a right of admiſſion*, this does not imply that profeſſion of faith muſt go before a right of profeſſing, which is *an act of acceſs*, and a ſtep taken in our coming to the Lord's table. So that the words he has quoted are nothing to the purpoſe of his argument.

His ſecond argument is grounded on this propoſition,

"None ought to come to the Lord's ſupper, but thoſe who are in the covenant of grace."

The aſſumption is, true ſaints only are in the covenant of grace. But this we deny, and have ſhewn that this notion is unſupported by ſcripture, contrary to ſcripture, and the conſent of thoſe who hold the divine right of infant baptiſm, who have always taught and maintained that the children of believers, though unregenerate, are intereſted in the covenant, and under the outward adminiſtration of it. Mr. Emmons's aſſertions to the contrary (for he hardly offers any thing which can properly be called an argument) have already been conſidered.

He then quotes a paſſage from the *Diſcourſe on the Church* purporting, that it is the duty of thoſe who by cordially conſenting to the covenant of grace, have taken the bond of it upon them, to uſe the ſpecial ordinances. But it is not ſaid, or intimated, or meant, that this is the duty of thoſe *only*, whoſe conſent to the covenant is cordial, or in gracious ſincerity. Some are in the covenant of grace, beſides thoſe who have cordially complied with it. And theſe may have a right to the privilege of outward communion, conſiſtently with what Mr. E. has here quoted.

It may be obſerved, that he ſays, "The duty of attending the ſacrament, is a *covenant duty*." How this could be ſaid by him conſiſtently with his aſſerting, that the covenant requires nothing but faith, and that ordinances are no parts, or articles of it, I underſtand not.

His third argument is built on this theſis: "None ought to come to the communion table, but thoſe who are qualified to enjoy communion there with Chriſt, and his friends"—meaning ſpiritual, holy communion, which true ſaints only enjoy: And ſince ſuch only are qualified for it, it is concluded, that ſuch only may and ought to come.

If it had been aſſerted, that none ought to come, but thoſe who find credible ſigns and reaſons to hope that they are ſo qualified as is expreſſed, this might have been admitted. But as it has been ſhewn, that our right or warrant to come to the Lord's ſupper, ariſes not from any inevident qualifications, but from reaſons which are, and are judged ſufficient; and that whoever finds reaſon to hope that he is in a meaſure qualified for ſpiritual communion with Chriſt and his friends, has a right and warrant to profeſs his faith and the reaſon of his hope, to aſk admiſſion, and upon admiſſion come to the holy ſupper, though it may not certainly appear what his inward ſtate, and qualifica-

tions are, the propoſition therefore is denied ; and cannot be maintained unleſs it can be proved that true ſaints only, find ſuch reaſons of hope reſpecting their qualifications, as will warrant and oblige them to come to the ordinance. The neceſſary conſequence of which, will be, that no doubting chriſtian may come ; and ſince this conſequence is *confeſſedly falſe*, the propoſition from which this is fairly and neceſſarily inferred, is falſe alſo.

That unbelievers are unqualified for ſpiritual communion with Chriſt and his ſaints we grant. But if ſuch may have hopeful, though doubtful evidence of ſanctifying grace, then they may have more reaſon to come than refrain, as has been argued, and is acknowledged.

To what he adds at the cloſe of this argument, I would ſay ; an Egyptian might have no warrant to keep the paſſover, however friendly to Iſrael, and the God of Iſrael, if he found no reaſon to think he was commanded to do it. But the Iſraelites, who had reaſon to think that this was enjoined on them, had reaſon to think it was their right and duty to keep the paſſover, though many of them were graceleſs. Regular church members, in full communion, have as good reaſon, for ought that appears, to think they are commanded to partake of the Lord's ſupper, whatever their inward ſtate may be, as the Iſraelites had to think they were commanded to keep the paſſover. But ſuch as are not members of an inſtituted church, though true ſaints, have no more reaſon to think they are commanded to partake of the Lord's ſupper, till they become church members, than an Egyptian had to think he was commanded to keep the paſſover.

Mr. E's laſt argument is comprehended in the following ſyllogiſm.

None ought to come to the Lord's ſupper, but thoſe who have ſome good evidence of inward ſanctification. But true ſaints only have any good evidence of inward ſanctification. Therefore, &c.

If he means by *good evidence*, ſuch evidence as may be a juſt foundation for a comfortable, though not an aſſured hope, in this ſenſe, and in this only, we have expreſsly granted his *propoſition*, in the words he has quoted. But then we do not grant his *aſſumption*, that true ſaints only have ſuch evidences of inward ſanctification, as may be a juſt foundation for ſome comfortable, though uncertain hope, nor do we find any ſufficient proof of it.

But if by *good evidence* he means certain evidence, ſuch as true ſaints only have, then we grant his *aſſumption*, that no graceleſs perſon, has *ſuch* evidence of inward ſanctification: But then we deny his *propoſition*, viz. That none may, or ought to come to the Lord's ſupper but thoſe who have certain evidence of inward ſanctification.

So that the point in debate is, whether any graceleſs perſon has, or can reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have, any credible evidence of ſanctifying grace. This Mr. E. denies. "No graceleſs perſon," ſays he, "can have *credible* evidence of ſanctifying grace in the view of a rightly informed conſcience." p. 108.

Let us now conſider what he offers in ſupport of this poſition. He ſays "God has given every man, an infallible rule by which he may aſcertain his own character. And it requires nothing but an impartial application of theſe [ſcriptural] marks to himſelf, in order to any perſon's forming a true judgment of his own character. Every good man may know, if he examines impartially, that he is a good man." I anſwer. Though every good man has grace, yet it is not always ſo ſenſibly in exerciſe, as that he can know, upon examination, that he is a good man. For though the ſigns of grace, as deſcribed in ſcripture, are certain, yet every good man cannot, by examining himſelf, however impartially, know, or certainly determine, whether what he finds in himſelf, be thoſe marks of grace which are deſcribed in the word of God; and ſome good men diſcern that in themſelves which may juſtly cauſe them to fear and ſuſpect, their ſincerity in religion. And an impartial examination of themſelves, would diſcover the reaſons they have to doubt their good eſtate. Grace in the heart can only be diſcerned by its ſenſible exerciſes. But it is not always ſenſibly in exerciſe. And when it is, the actings of it may be ſo weak, and ſo clouded, defiled, and as it were diſguiſed by indwelling ſin, that a chriſtian may not be able, by ſelf examination, to know what his ſtate is. This ſentiment is largely aſſerted and illuſtrated by Mr. Edwards, in his *Treatiſe on Religious Affections*. As his book is common with us, and the paſſage is ſomething lengthy, I ſhall only recite a few of his words, near the beginning of the third part. "No ſuch ſigns are to be expected as ſhall be ſufficient to enable thoſe ſaints certainly to diſcern their own good eſtate, who are very low in grace. It is not agreeable to God's deſign, that ſuch ſhould know their good eſtate. Nor is it deſirable that they ſhould. There is a two-fold defect in ſuch a ſaint, which makes it impoſſible for

him to know certainly that he has true grace by the beſt rules and ſigns that can be given him.

"Firſt, a defect in the object or qualification to be examined. Not an eſſential defect, but a defect in degree. Grace being very ſmall, cannot be certainly diſcerned and diſtinguiſhed. Secondly, a defect in the eye, &c." And however blameable chriſtians are, when the exerciſes of grace in them, are ſo low that they cannot be certainly diſcerned, yet they are not blameable for doubting of their ſtate, when they diſcern no certain evidence of it in themſelves. And however ſure the rule is by which they examine themſelves; yet many, for the reaſons above intimated, cannot certainly determine, upon the moſt impartial examination, whether what they find in themſelves anſwers to the rule; or whether "their views and feelings be ſuch as God has aſcribed to ſaints."

Nor has Mr. E. proved, that every good man may know, by impartial examination, that his ſtate is good. For admitting that "He has exerciſes of grace, which (if known to be ſuch) are real (certain) evidence of his good eſtate," how does this prove that every one who has ſuch exerciſes can know that what he, upon impartial examination, finds in himſelf is an exerciſe of grace, or a certain evidence of his good eſtate; when, as Mr. Edwards ſays, grace being very ſmall cannot be certainly diſcerned and diſtinguiſhed.

Mr. E. adds "A graceleſs perſon has no real evidence of grace." I anſwer. Though ſuch a one has no *certain* evidence, yet that he has no *real*, *credible*, *hopeful* ſigns of grace, Mr. Emmons has not proved, and it never will be proved to eternity, unleſs it is proved that there are no credible, probable or hopeful ſigns of a good eſtate, which one may have and diſcern in himſelf, except what are a certain infallible evidence of it, which no reaſonable man ſurely will undertake to maintain. And though he who concludes certainly that his ſtate is good, merely from probable and doubtful evidence "deceives himſelf," yet this cannot be ſaid of him, who, finding hopeful, though not infallible, ſigns of grace in himſelf, judges that he has reaſon for a comfortable, though not aſſured hope; and accordingly hope in proportion to the reaſon for it, which he diſcerns. And though a graceleſs perſon has no true love, repentance, faith, &c. as Mr. E. ſays, page 111; yet this proves not that he is wholly deſtitute of the evidence of grace. There may be hopeful, credible ſigns; where there is not the truth of grace. And theſe ſigns may be viſible to a man's own conſcience, as well as to the church; unleſs we abſurdly ſay, there

are no hopeful ſigns of any beginning of a work of grace, but ſuch as are infallible evidences of a good eſtate; and that no one may entertain the leaſt degree of hope of his own ſincerity, ſhort of full aſſurance, as has been ſaid. Exerciſes of grace, diſcerned and known to be genuine, are indeed the only certain evidences of a good eſtate, in the view of a right conſcience. And if any one abſolutely determines that he is a true ſaint, without finding ſuch evidences in himſelf, he judges unwarrantably, and is in danger of deceiving himſelf. But there are hopeful ſigns which are not infallible marks. And a right conſcience may judge that there are ſuch reaſons of hope as it diſcerns; and though theſe will not make the reality and certainty of his good eſtate fully to appear, yet theſe may be a rational foundation for a degree of comfortable hope of one's ſincerity in religion. And if ſuch a hope, grounded on ſuch evidence, is a ſufficient warrant for his profeſſing religion, and coming into the communion of a church; then a right conſcience will judge accordingly, and approve the warrant, though it will not poſitively determine what his ſtate may be.

But Mr. E. ſays further, "Every graceleſs perſon has clear, full, poſitive evidence, that he is graceleſs." p. 78. 111. But upon the moſt careful examination, I can find nothing to ſupport this his aſſertion. He repeats, and inculcates it, and takes it for granted very confidently, as his manner is, and draws conſequences from it. And this is all that I can find of any importance. He ſays, "ſince every graceleſs perſon is graceleſs, he not only may, but muſt know it, unleſs he deceives himſelf." But this conſequence we deny. And we find nothing to ſupport it; though we grant that there is a real and moſt important difference between a true ſaint and ſinner, yet he has not proved that this can always be clearly and certainly diſcerned, by the eye of man. Unleſs he can make it appear, that there is ſome certain, poſitive mark of unregeneracy which is found in every graceleſs perſon, and that every ſuch perſon may, and muſt always certainly diſcern it in himſelf, and know it to be an infallible evidence of an unregenerate ſtate, unleſs he judges contrary to reaſon and evidence; he ſays nothing to the purpoſe of proving that every graceleſs perſon may, and muſt know himſelf to be graceleſs, unleſs he deceives himſelf.

However "deſtitute of holineſs" a man may be, he cannot know this to be his caſe, unleſs he finds certain evidence of it. But what evidence of this has every graceleſs man? Suppoſe he finds not any known and diſcernable exerciſe of grace: this is frequently the caſe with good men: otherwiſe they could

never doubt of their own ſincerity. It would be impoſſible for thoſe to doubt of this, who were conſcious of ſuch exerciſes as they knew to be gracious. A want of ſenſible exerciſes of grace, therefore, does not make it certain that one is in a graceleſs ſtate. Again, ſuppoſe one finds himſelf "full of ſin;" Neither is this a certain evidence that he is graceleſs: for true chriſtians have a greater ſenſe of their own ſinfulneſs than others, cauſing them to cry out with the apoſtle, "I am carnal, ſold under ſin."

A rightly informed conſcience will not judge one to be certainly, a true ſaint unleſs it find certain evidence of it. But it will not judge one to be certainly graceleſs, though he finds not ſuch evidences in his own favor as he knows to be certain and infallible. If he finds that, ſo far as he knows himſelf, he does ſincerely believe, and approve, and endeavor to obey the goſpel; and that his converſation is, in ſome good meaſure, conformable to its rules; it appears not what certain evidence ſuch a one has that he is graceleſs. There are ſuch ſigns of ſincerity as a right conſcience will allow to be of conſiderable weight, and ſuch as may warrantably encourage ſome comfortable hope, though they may leave the mind in doubt.

And though Mr. E. ſays, "If the conſcience of any graceleſs man be rightly informed, and attend to all the evidence ariſing from the exerciſes of his heart, it will pronounce him a total enemy to God;" yet as he offers nothing in proof of this his aſſertion, ſo I preſume it cannot be proved to be univerſally true, unleſs it can be made to appear that there is not only a real, but alſo a *diſcernable* difference, *in all caſes*, between the views and exerciſes of the regenerate and unregenerate, whereby every man might always be able certainly to know what his true ſtate is.

But how groundleſs and unreaſonable is ſuch a ſuppoſition. There may be the ſeeds of grace in a man, which his own conſcience, when as well informed as it is the will of God that it ſhould be, may not be able certainly to diſcern and diſtinguiſh. For as Mr. Edwards ſays, "It is not the will of God that chriſtians, who are weak in grace, ſhould be able certainly to diſcern and diſtinguiſh it." And there may be alſo fair imitations of grace, which the moſt judicious and experienced chriſtians cannot certainly determine, when they diſcern them in themſelves, whether, or how far they are genuine. Hence it is ſo common a caſe, that chriſtians, who have the moſt ſatisfactory evidence of their own ſincerity, are not able to determine certainly, or to their own ſatisfaction, the time of their firſt converſion. It is

a weak and vain fancy, to think that men can always diſcern and diſtinguiſh all exerciſes of grace from all reſemblances of them, even in themſelves. And it ſhews men to have a ſlight and poor acquaintance with their own hearts when they pretend to any ſuch thing. It is mere quackery to pretend to diſtinguiſh common from ſaving grace in all caſes, by feeling the pulſe of our hearts, or to ſplit the thread exactly between the exerciſes and expreſſions of common and ſaving grace in every inſtance, ſo as certainly to diſtinguiſh the one from the other, in our own experiences. God never intended that we ſhould be able to do this; and it is beſt we ſhould not be able to do it. We may hope comfortably, ſo far as hopeful ſigns appear, but not reſt ſatisfied till we have made our calling and election ſure, and given all diligence to attain to the full aſſurance of hope.

As many, who are the ſubjects of ſanctifying grace may diſcern in themſelves dangerous marks of reigning ſin, ſo many who have apoſtatized in the day of temptation, have had hopeful ſigns of a good work begun in them. They have received the word with joy, and it has had ſuch an effect upon them, that they have for a time eſcaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of Chriſt, and yet they have been again entangled and overcome. They have been enlightened, taſted of the heavenly gift, been partakers of the holy Ghoſt, they have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and yet have fallen away without recovery. I fear they are but dangerous guides, who encourage men at once to entertain an aſſured perſuaſion of their good eſtate, merely from thoſe good feelings, and exerciſes of heart, which they think they find in themſelves in their religious frames. It is not ſo eaſy a matter for us to know our own hearts, and what manner of ſpirit we are of, as ſuch imagine.

But ſuppoſing that every graceleſs perſon might know himſelf to be graceleſs, if he did diſcern all the evidence of it, which is within his view, and which his conſcience, when *fully enlightened*, is capable of diſcerning; yet as the characters of men are mixed, ſo good ſigns and bad ſigns are blended together; and we can no otherwiſe judge than according to the light and evidence we have and diſcern. And the conſcience may be *rightly informed*, ſo as to determine what may and ought to be done, *according to the light and evidence we have*, and *muſt conduct ourſelves by, till better appears*; though we may not know that it is *fully informed*, or that we actually diſcern all the evidence, which we might diſcern, if we gave

all that attention we were capable of, and were not blinded by any improper bias.

The queſtion then will come to this, whether one, who, upon ſerious examination finds, that, ſo far as he knows himſelf, he does ſincerely believe the chriſtian religion, and conſent to the covenant of grace, and knows of nothing in himſelf which would prove him to be graceleſs, has not reaſon to hope that he is ſincere, though he knows not but that if he did actually diſcern all that in himſelf which conſcience, *fully informed*, might diſcern, he might poſſibly judge differently of his character and ſtate. And whether ſuch a one has not *reaſon to judge*, or, which is to the ſame effect, whether his conſcience may not rightly judge that he may and ought to profeſs religion and come to the Lord's ſupper, rather than refrain becauſe he is not aſſured of his good eſtate.

If he may not, then no doubting chriſtian may or ought to come. For no doubting chriſtian, while ſuch, does, or can know but that there may be ſomething in himſelf, which he might be capable of diſcerning (though he is not conſcious of it) which might convince him that he is graceleſs. *If he knew that this was not the caſe*, he could no longer doubt his good eſtate. But it is granted by Mr. Edwards, that a man is bound in reaſon and conſcience to conduct himſelf *according to what appears to him to be the beſt and ſtrongeſt reaſon in this caſe*. It is alſo granted by all, that doubting chriſtians may come to the ſacrament; which is the ſame thing as granting that they may have a warrant or right of acceſs. Taking theſe points for granted, as they are, the caſe ſeems to be reſolved, and Mr. E's aſſertion ſufficiently refuted.

As to what he adds at the cloſe of the chapter concerning the miſapplication of commands, I ſhall only ſay; when he will prove that all graceleſs perſons are as *poſitively forbidden* to come to the Lord's ſupper, as believers are required, a point which he chuſes rather to take for granted; and when he will give ſcriptural marks by which all graceleſs perſons may know themſelves to be ſuch, then we will grant that he who either comes, or neglects to come, in obedience to the dictates of an erroneous conſcience, is guilty of a ſin of ignorance; but it is not a miſapplication of a command to have an obediential reſpect to it, when we find probable reaſons to think it to be enjoined on us.

When men doubt whether a command is enjoined on them, they muſt, as Mr. Edwards ſays, "act according to the beſt of their judgment." For a man to act contrary to the dictates of

his own conſcience, though erroneous, is certainly a known preſumptuous ſin, which is more dangerous than to offend ignorantly.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE now come to the long chapter of *Strictures*, which is divided into ten Sections.

SECTION I.

CONTAINS Strictures on the account given of viſible holineſs. We had a ſpecimen of thoſe before, in the fifth chapter.

We had deſcribed a viſible holineſs as a diſcernable, external, and real character, or qualification. It is *diſcernable*, for that is what we mean by viſible. It is *external*, for nothing is *properly* viſible or diſcernable in another but what is external. Grace in the heart is *properly* and certainly viſible to him alone who ſearches the heart, though it may be ſaid to be viſible in an *improper ſenſe*, when ſuch outward ſigns are diſcerned as are ſuppoſed to be often, though not always, connected with it; by means of which the credebility, or probability of it may be ſeen, though the certainty of it cannot. It is a *real character*. For nothing can be truly and properly diſcerned but what is real, though the credibility, or probability, of that which has no real exiſtence may ſometimes appear.

What then is this diſcernable, outward, and real qualification, which makes one a viſible ſaint, or forms his character as ſuch? I anſwer. It conſiſts partly in that *relation to God*, which ariſes from being in covenant with him, by being outwardly and viſibly ſeparated from the reſt of the world, and dedicated to him. This is commonly called *federal*, or *covenant holineſs*; ſo the children of Iſrael being in covenant with God, were all federally holy. And on the ſame account the members of inſtituted churches are all holy, not excepting their infant children, as the apoſtle teſtifies. Beſides this outward relative holineſs, there is an *outward inherent holineſs*, which conſiſts in a profeſſion of true religion, with an orderly converſation. Theſe viſible outward qualifications form a real cha-

racter, and conſtitute the ſubject *a real viſible ſaint.* Such are really in covenant, really dedicated to God outwardly; really profeſſors of religion, really orderly in their outward behaviour, &c.

This outward holineſs above deſcribed is alſo *a ſign or expreſſion of inward holineſs.* An outward viſible covenant relation to God, is a ſign of an inviſible relation to him. Profeſſion of faith and repentance is a ſign of inward faith and repentance. The conſent of the mouth is a ſign of the conſent of the heart, a good life is a ſign of a good heart. But as theſe ſigns *are not certain*, ſo they do not aſcertain the truth and reality of grace in the heart, or render it *properly viſible*, or diſcernable. They can only manifeſt its *credibility* or *probability.* When therefore we ſpeak of inward holineſs as being viſible or diſcernable, the word is not uſed in its proper ſenſe, as when we ſay that outward holineſs, which is the ſign of it, is viſible, but we mean no more than that the *probability* of inward holineſs is manifeſted. So that it is *only in a figurative and improper ſenſe*, that grace in the heart is viſible. But if we ſpeak properly, it is viſible to him only who knows the heart.

But the goſpel rule, by which we are to conduct ourſelves towards others is, that in a judgment of charity, we hold and receive, viſible ſaints, for ſaints in heart; profeſſors for believers; thoſe in whom ſigns of grace are diſcerned, for gracious perſons. We are, I ſay, thus to receive them in a judgment of charity, hoping and preſuming the beſt, according to the hopeful evidence in their favor, which appears in them. Not that we are bound *poſitively to believe*, all and each viſible ſaint to be a ſubject of ſanctifying grace. No; for we know that viſible holineſs is but an uncertain ſign of a ſanctified heart. We know, from the teſtimony of the ſcriptures, that many viſible ſaints, in whom ſigns of grace appear, are graceleſs. So that though we ought not to *judge* any viſible ſaint to be an hypocrite, yet it is no breach of the goſpel rule of charity to *doubt* of ſome, and be jealous over them, and to fear whether a great part of them, may not be found falſe profeſſors. This is as plain a repreſentation as I could give in brief of *that notion of viſible holineſs*, on which Mr. E. has made his *Strictures*, which promiſe to ſet it in a true light.

1. He ſays, "If viſible holineſs exiſts, out of the mind, *and may be ſeen by the bodily eye*, then it is as eaſy to diſtinguiſh viſible ſaints from viſible ſinners, as to diſtinguiſh large men from ſmall." Anſwer. Doubtleſs viſible ſaints may be diſtinguiſhed from viſible ſinners; but ſome things which may

be *certainly* ſeen and diſtinguiſhed are not ſo *eaſily* diſtinguiſhed as others. Cannot a church diſtinguiſh a profeſſor of religion who walks orderly, from one who profeſſes not, and lives ſcandalouſly? Cannot they diſtinguiſh ſigns of grace, from expreſſions of wickedneſs? It is not ſaid however, that this can be done merely *by the bodily eye*. That is his own paraphraſe, which he has unwarrantably inſerted to miſrepreſent my meaning and impoſe upon his readers. I only ſaid, *viſible holineſs might be ſeen and diſcerned*, and its reality aſcertaind. He adds,

2. "To ſay that viſible holineſs is ſomething diſtinct from the mind *and to be ſeen by the bodily eye*, is as contrary to the dictates of common ſenſe, as to ſay, that viſible reaſon or viſible love, are objects of ſight." Anſwer. To ſay that viſible holineſs is diſcernable, and that whatever is properly diſcernable is real, is, I think, not contrary to common ſenſe. And this is all that I have aſſerted. What is in the heart is viſible only in an *improper ſenſe*, as has been ſaid. As for "*viſible love* and *reaſon*," if we mean a *proper viſibility*, as we do when we ſay that outward ſigns of grace are viſible and diſcernable, I, for my part, have no proper and certain diſcernment of theſe things in any man's mind and heart, except my own. Indeed I can diſcern plain *ſigns* and *expreſſions* of both, in others, though there ſeems to be but little of either of them, expreſſed in Mr. E's *Strictures*. What follows is only a repetition of that capital miſtake of his, which has ſo miſerably bewildered him; that *there is no kind of holineſs but grace in the heart*, which, without the leaſt ſhadow of proof, he nakedly aſſerts, though the contrary is as evident from ſcripture, as it is that there was an *outward* as well as *inward* circumciſion: as certain as that the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs were an holy people, being in covenant with God, though their heart was not right with him, and they were not ſtedfaſt in his covenant: as certain as that the children of believers are holy, though many of them are unregenerate. As certain as that there are viſible ſaints who are not inward ſaints. This has been accordingly the concurrent ſenſe of the church. And it is hard to imagine what a man could think of himſelf, to oppoſe his own *mere aſſertion*, againſt all this, and much more, which might have been mentioned, an *aſſertion*, unſupported by any thing which looks like an argument. To content himſelf with gravely ſaying, "the truth is," ſo and ſo, ſome will be apt to think is ridiculous.

3. He adds "If the Doctor's account of viſible holineſs be juſt, then we can have no evidence of the internal holineſs of

any perſon or being beſides ourſelves." This conſequence, (which we deny) he endeavors to ſupport as follows: "According to this ſuppoſition, there may be the reality of viſible holineſs, where there is not the reality of internal holineſs. Suppoſing, then, that we ſhould be able to aſcertain the viſible holineſs of any of our fellow men, we could by no means infer from the viſibility of their viſible holineſs, the reality of their internal holineſs." Anſwer. Viſible holineſs, though it is not an infallible evidence of grace in the heart, and ſo does not *aſcertain* the reality of it, yet is a credible evidence, and the only evidence of it which we can diſcern in another; the only evidence on which a judgment of charity is grounded. A profeſſion of faith and repentance, and conſent to the covenant is not a certain evidence that the profeſſor is a ſaint in heart. Does it follow that it is no credible evidence of it? He adds, "Suppoſing we ſhould be able to aſcertain the viſible holineſs of the divine being, we could not thence infer the reality of his internal holineſs." How ſhocking is this? To ſay that the diſcernable manifeſtations and expreſſions which God has made of his holineſs (which is all that can be meant by his viſible holineſs) are no certain evidence that he is a holy being; as if becauſe men are often hypocrites, who exhibit a falſe ſhew of holineſs, we might reaſonably ſuppoſe the ſame of the divine being.

How far ſigns of grace are of a moral quality, we need not enquire. However, that which has no moral quality, may be a hopeful evidence of grace. It is no virtue in a perſon to be a child of a believer, and ſo intereſted in the covenant, and to have a religious education; and yet if thoſe promiſes are to be relied on which intail a bleſſing on the ſeed of the righteous, and declare that a child trained up in the way that he ſhould go will not depart from it, theſe advantages are hopeful ſigns that the ſubject of them is, or will be a ſubject of inward ſanctification.

He concludes the ſection with ſaying, that "external holineſs (as deſcribed in the *Diſcourſe*, and by which he ſays, p. 96, the author means ſigns of grace) is no more a ſign of inward ſanctification than outward wickedneſs." "That a church compoſed of ſuch viſible ſaints [that is ſuch as exhibit ſigns of grace] exhibits no more evidence of true holineſs, or real piety than a church compoſed of viſible ſinners." Did ever more palpable abſurdity flow from the pen of any man?

In no part of Mr. Emmons's performance has he, in my opinion, made more miſerable work than in this ſection. It

has been a matter of patience to attend to it; and to ſave my patience and that of the reader, ſeveral paſſages, very remarkable, have deſignedly been paſſed over without notice.

SECTION II.

HE next gives us his ſtrictures on this ſentiment. "That viſible ſaints, though deſtitute of grace, have a right in the ſight of God, as well as in the ſight of men, to come to the table of the Lord." He calls this my opinion. But I own it not, as here expreſſed. My opinion was plainly expreſſed, *Diſcourſe* p. 36, to this effect. It is only the right of admiſſion which any have in the *ſight of the church*, or which is viſible to them. All who have a right of acceſs, or a right to come to the Lord's table, have this right in the ſight of God, and in the ſight of their own conſcience, but not in the ſight of men; becauſe this right lies out of their ſight, and it belongs not to them to judge of it, but only the right of admiſſion. Simon Magus had a right of admiſſion in the ſight of God, and the church, and accordingly was admitted agreeably to the rule of the goſpel: But whether one has a right *to come*, is a matter which lies out of the ſight of men, who cannot ſearch the heart.

He quotes a paſſage from the *Diſcourſe* purporting, that profeſſors of true religion, who are neither ſcandalous, nor conſcious of hypocriſy, are viſible ſaints, and ſo far intereſted in the covenant in the ſight of God, that they have a divine right outwardly to uſe ſpecial ordinances. If they have any intereſt in the covenant, it muſt be in his ſight who ſees all things. Mr. E. has expreſſed the ſame ſentiment very fully, when he ſaid, "It is a given point that all viſible ſaints are proper ſubjects of ſpecial ordinances," of which, notice has been taken before. But he here ſets himſelf to refute it; and his great argument is only this: If he has given a juſt definition of the covenant, then only true believers belong to it, and have a right to any of its peculiar bleſſings. But an argument built on that erroneous definition, muſt be very weak, and ſo I leave it.

He then quotes ſome words, importing that ſaving faith is the condition of acceſs to thoſe bleſſings of the covenant which belong to its inviſible adminiſtration; which he compares with another paſſage, in which it is ſaid that the belief of the heart is preſuppoſed to profeſſion, and profeſſion of faith goes before *a right of admiſſion* to church privileges. And he has ſtrained and tortured theſe paſſages to extort from them a meaning which was never expreſſed nor intended. As if becauſe pro-

feſſion of faith, which gives a right of admiſſion, preſuppoſes *faith*, therefore no one can be a profeſſor, or have a right of admiſſion, unleſs he has *ſaving faith*. The Iſraelites at mount Sinai, Simon, and many others, had ſuch faith, and made ſuch a profeſſion, as gave them a right of admiſſion, though they had not ſaving faith. As to the *right of acceſs*, the quoted paſſage ſays nothing. And his ſaying "I have allowed that *ſaving faith* is a condition of the covenant, which muſt *go before a right of admiſſion*, to external communion," ſhews that he has not attended to his ſubject, or to the *Diſcourſe* which he has made the object of his *Strictures*, ſo as to underſtand them. His notions are ſuperficial, and confuſed. The quoted paſſages, it may eaſily be ſeen, are ſo worded that he can get no advantage from them.

He then obſerves truly, that "I diſtinguiſh between the viſible and inviſible adminiſtration of the covenant." This diſtinction is no novel invention to ſerve a particular ſcheme, as he afterwards ſuggeſts; but has a plain and ſolid foundation in the ſcriptures, and has been conſtantly received and approved in the reformed churches; but, he ſays, "this amounts to the ſame as dividing it into two covenants." But no ſhadow of evidence is offered in ſupport of this: Nor has he ſhewn what *inconſiſtency* there is in ſuppoſing that the ſame covenant may contain promiſes of different privileges, and upon different conditions, but contents himſelf with ſuggeſting weakly that it is *inconſiſtent*.

What he ſays of my profeſſedly drawing my arguments from the Moſaic diſpenſation has been noticed before. But he ſays "the Jews were called a holy people becauſe they profeſſed to love God, and exhibited public evidence that they were inwardly holy"—And what is ſuch a profeſſion but outward holineſs? not holineſs of heart, of which many of them doubtleſs were deſtitute. And Deut. ix. 7. 24. xxix. 4. ſhews that they were not called a holy people becauſe they were all believed to be ſaints in heart. They were holy as being in covenant with God; tho' their heart was not right with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his covenant. Pſ. lxxviii. 37. They could not have been juſtly taxed with *unſtedfaſtneſs in the covenant* of God, tho' their heart was not right, unleſs they had been *taken into covenant*. And tho' it was not taken for granted, or aſſerted in the *Diſcourſe* that the condition of the Sinai covenant was viſible external holineſs; yet ſince Mr. E. grants that they were taken into covenant upon a profeſſion of godlineſs, which profeſſion was only *outward holineſs*, and many who were taken into cov-

enant were deſtitute of inward holineſs, I think we may now take it for granted by Mr. E. at leaſt, that the condition upon which they were received and owned by God as his people, according to the Sinai covenant, was outward holineſs. It is true he has alſo denied this; but if he will be inconſiſtent, who can help it?

I find nothing more in this ſection which need be noticed, except his ſaying that thoſe external duties which he calls "appendages of the covenant" belong only to true ſaints; and ſo the diſtinction between the viſible and inviſible adminiſtration of the covenant, is not only groundleſs, but utterly fails of anſwering the ſole purpoſe for which it was invented." I preſume he will find it hard to ſay by whom it was invented, or for what purpoſe. But what I would obſerve is, that all this is ſaid, as almoſt all his ſingular aſſertions, without any thing which looks like an argument to ſupport it; he has only modeſtly begged the queſtion. Indeed this is a ſtriking trait which marks his performance from beginning to end. He cannot, or will not dig, but to beg he is not aſhamed.

SECTION III.

THE chief matters contained in his next ſection have been conſidered, in examining our author's ſixth chapter. It has been ſhewn, that to ſay an object is *viſible*, expreſſes a different idea from ſaying that it *appears*, or *is judged* to be ſuch an object. Every thing which is ſeen is indeed viſible; but not every thing which is viſible is ſeen by, or appears to every one to whom it is viſible, or capable of being diſcerned. And ſome judge otherwiſe of perſons and things than they viſibly are. Some are judged to be viſible ſaints, who are not ſuch; others, who are really viſible ſaints, are judged not to be ſuch. This ſeems too obvious to need to be inſiſted on. It has alſo been ſhewn that a church may *warrantably* receive all whom they *ought* to receive. And they ought to receive ſound profeſſors of true religion, who are not ſcandalous, though, for want of charity, they ſhould not believe them to be true ſaints. That credible evidence of grace, exhibited and diſcerned, and not the reality of grace believed (or in other words, the charitable thought or judgment of a church) gives a profeſſor a right of admiſſion, and makes it the duty of a church to receive him, and exerciſe charity towards him; ſo that, as it is expreſſed in the words quoted by Mr. E. "God has not made it neceſſary for us to believe that men are truly pious, in order to its being our duty

to admit them. We are allowed, nay, required to admit credible profeſſors, be our opinion of them what it may."

It is a groſs miſtake in Mr. E. to ſay, that I ſuppoſed this would ſound like a paradox. No ſuch thing was ever ſaid, or intimated. So far from it, that I thought, and ſtill think, that it muſt appear indiſputably true to all men of middling diſcernment. And that to ſuppoſe that the charity or uncharitableneſs of a church, is that which muſt determine *what they ought to do*, and whether a profeſſor ought to be admitted, was too big and palpable an abſurdity for any reaſonable man to imagine. I ſhould almoſt think it loſt labour to pretend to reaſon with one who is ſo wrong-headed, as deliberately to give in to ſuch a wild notion.

If, as Mr. E. ſays, "he might with propriety deny the infants of believers to be viſible ſaints," then he might with propriety contradict the apoſtle, who tells believers expreſsly, "your children are holy." And again, "If the root be holy, ſo are the branches." We grant, that they are to be reputed *real ſaints* in their kind; that is, really the ſubjects of federal holineſs, as being *really* in the covenant. But it does not follow that we are bound to believe abſolutely, that they are all real ſaints in the ſenſe intended by Mr. E. that is, ſaints in heart, though this may be charitably hoped; nor has he ſaid one word to ſupport this his inference.

He ſays again, that "I hold external holineſs may appear where there is no appearance of inward piety." This is another great miſrepreſentation, if by appearance of inward piety he means ſigns of grace; ſince I conſtantly hold, external holineſs, even the federal holineſs of infants, to be a hopeful ſign, ſince the covenant includes believers and their children. Then after reciting ſeveral ſentences expreſſing this ſentiment, he adds, "here the bubble breaks and vaniſhes." I ſuppoſe he muſt be ſenſible, by this time, that the bubble he ſpeaks of was blown up in his own brains. If I did not begin to be a little acquainted with Mr. Emmons, I ſhould be aſtoniſhed that any one ſhould have the face to ſay, that I did not hold viſible holineſs to be a ſign of internal, when no ſuch thing was ever intimated, but the contrary conſtantly aſſerted, in the moſt plain and pointed language. Though outward holineſs appears in different degrees, yet every degree is a hopeful ſign, but there is no degree which is an infallible evidence of inward ſanctification. But he argues, "If the church have evidence of external holineſs, then they have the ſame evidence of internal." Anſwer. The evidence we have of the latter is not the ſame, nor equal

to the evidence we have of the former. The ſign is certainly and properly viſible, grace in the heart cannot be certainly diſcerned. *It is viſible only in an improper ſenſe*; ſinçe there are outward ſigns which have a known and certain connection with it. When I hear one profeſs true religion, I may *know* that he is a *profeſſor*, a *viſible ſaint*. I have a proper and certain diſcernment of this; but I cannot properly and certainly diſcern, whether he be a *true believer*, though I have alſo hopeful evidence of this. For profeſſors are often, though not always true believers. And though we ſometimes ſpeak of grace as being viſible, yet this is true only in an improper ſenſe: We only mean that it appears *credible* or *probable*, as has been explained.

Though outward holineſs appears in different degrees, yet the lower degrees may be properly and certainly diſcerned, as well as the higher. There may be more ſigns of grace in one than in another. But we may be as certain that a profeſſor of religion, who is not ſcandalous, is a viſible ſaint, though but a weak profeſſor, and though we may ſee reaſon to be jealous over him, as if he exhibited high degrees of viſible holineſs. And after Mr. Emmons had aſſerted that ſome viſible ſaints are not ſaints in heart; that Judas, for inſtance, was for a time a viſible ſaint, it ſeems ſtrange that he ſhould yet roundly affirm that "The church ought to admit none to communion, but ſuch as they as much believe are *real*, as *viſible* ſaints. And that they are no leſs certain of their real, than of their viſible holineſs." What can be more inconſiſtent? The ſentence which follows next after the words laſt quoted ſhews again that he is liable to make miſtakes in reporting facts. He ſays, that "I obſerve that taking viſible ſaints collectively, there is a preſumptive evidence, that each individual is a hypocrite." This is ſo far from being true, that I have ſaid expreſsly, "I know not but that the greater part of viſible ſaints may be ſincere." And the aſſertion of thoſe who have ſaid, that much the greateſt part of viſible ſaints are graceleſs is mentioned with diſapprobation, as raſh.

But he ſays, "Suppoſing a church may have reaſon to doubt of the ſincerity of profeſſors in general, yet they have no reaſon to doubt of the ſincerity of one who gives clear and ſtriking evidence of real piety." I anſwer. Though that of which we have not certain evidence may be held as doubtful in ſome degree; yet I grant that ſome give ſuch clear and ſtriking evidence of piety as is exceedingly ſatisfactory, and leaves little room to ſuſpect their ſincerity. But *ſuch a degree* of evidence

in favor of a perſon is not neceſſary in order to his being undoubtedly a viſible ſaint, and an object of our charity. For we find the apoſtle expreſſed great jealouſy, and doubts, concerning ſome whom he acknowledges as members of the church, as was before obſerved.

I grant, however, that a church, judging merely from *what appears in a profeſſor*, may have more evidence of his ſincerity, than ſigns of hypocriſy. And if what Mr. E. has quoted to this purpoſe, comes fully up to his ſentiment, as he ſays; I think it may eaſily be made to appear, that it is not inconſiſtent with what was quoted by him a little before, "that we never ſhall be able to determine, till the day of judgment, whether there be a preponderating probability in favor of a profeſſor." For though the evidences of grace, which *appear in him*, are ſuppoſed to outweigh the evidences of a graceleſs ſtate, which may *appear in him*, and conſequently judging merely from what *appears in him*, it is moſt probable that he is ſincere; yet there is *other evidence* in the caſe, beſides what *appears in him*; evidence which the judgment of charity makes no account of, as not being admiſſible by the rule of the goſpel *in foro eccleſiæ*. And that is, the teſtimony of the ſcriptures, that many viſible ſaints, who give clear and ſtriking evidence of real piety, many whoſe life and creed, and profeſſion are good, ſo far as the church can diſcern, many whom they are evidently bound to receive as true ſaints, are yet graceleſs, compared to fooliſh virgins, who have taken their lamps without oil in their veſſels. And we know not how many will be found to have been of this character; and ſo cannot determine whether this might not turn the ſcale of probability againſt a profeſſor, notwithſtanding the hopeful ſigns which appear in him; if we could eſtimate the weight of it, and were to take it into our account.

In this manner I had carefully explained my meaning; and now I can freely leave it to the intelligent reader to judge, whether what Mr. E. calls my conceſſion and aſſertion, do not harmonize. And whether his taking no notice of the explanation which was given, is acting the part of a fair and manly diſputant, or a caviller.

In anſwer to what was argued, that the irregular and erroneous judgment of a church, does not nullify *his* right, who exhibits ſuch qualifications as give him a right of admiſſion, or releaſe them from their obligation to admit him; Mr. E. ſays, that "God has given the church, imperfect as they are, the right of admiſſion, [admitting;] and they muſt ſee with their own eyes." I reply. God has given the church a rule according to

which they are to exercise this right; but he has given them no right to swerve from this rule, either in admitting or rejecting. And though they must see with their own eyes; they have no right to wink against evidence, or blind, or spoil their eyes with prejudice.

He then argues as before, that a church must be inwardly convinced of the real piety of every one whom they admit to communion. That they would be unfaithful to Christ if they should admit any who they suppose are his enemies. Answer. If they are faithful to Christ, they will judge according to the gospel rule, which allows us not to judge those to be enemies, who give such evidence of being his friends as the gospel rule requires, to give a right of admission, though we should not be fully convinced, by uncertain evidence, that they are his friends. He argues further, that church members cannot love as brethren, as they are required, unless they verily believe each other to be friends of Christ. I answer. A profession of christianity, not discredited by a scandalous life, is a sufficient foundation for that brotherly love, which the gospel requires of christians towards each other. If they are of a charitable spirit, they will judge charitably of such professors, and receive them as brethren, as the gospel rule requires. And this they may do, though they should not absolutely conclude what their inward state is, from evidence known to be uncertain.

If we ought to exercise charity towards all visible saints, we have a *plain, certain rule*; for we may know that all sound professors, of orderly conversation, are visible saints; though we know that many of them, and know not how many are graceless. And to ground our brotherly love on visible external holiness, is the same thing as grounding it on the evidence of inward sanctification; since visible, external holiness, is all the evidence of inward sanctification which christians can discern in each other.

Mr. E. thinks this a *singular rule of charity*; that is, to hold those for objects of charity, in whom signs of grace appear; for this, he truly says, is what I mean by external holiness, and that it consists in a profession of true religion, not discredited by scandalous errors or practices; and that this is the most dangerous error in the *Discourse on the Church.* I cannot but think it to be not only truth, but a truth of great importance: and though it be generally acknowledged, yet that it has not been so distinctly considered, in its consequences, by many, as it ought to be; which if it were, it might be a good clue to lead the consciences of christians, out of that perplexing labyrinth

in which ſome have entangled them; and correct that dangerous miſtake, in which ſome have been too much encouraged, of ſetting up unſcriptural rules for judging the ſtate of profeſſors, and making things, terms of chriſtian communion, for which their is neither precept nor example to be found in the ſcriptures, or in the primitive church. And alſo, that it might help to ſhew, that thoſe who have been ſuppoſed to differ in opinion reſpecting the qualifications for admiſſion to church communion, differ very little in the rule by which they profeſs to conduct themſelves; both profeſſing to open the doors of the church to all, and only thoſe, who make ſuch a profeſſion of faith and repentance, that in a judgment of charity, they ought to be received as true chriſtians.

SECTION IV.

IN the next ſection we have a repetition of what Mr. Emmons had offered in the latter part of his ſeventh chapter, and which we have already examined. We refer the reader to the remarks on that, for an explication of our opinion, with the grounds of it, and a reply to his arguings—and ſhall only add, that we find ourſelves ſtrengthened in this point by the ſuffrage of Preſident Edwards. He has declared his judgment, not only that ſome, who doubt whether they are ſaints in heart, may, and muſt, and are bound to come to the ſacrament, which implies that they have a right or warrant to come as has been noted; but has alſo declared, "that a perſon, whoſe public profeſſion of religion, expreſſed the cardinal virtues and acts implied in a hearty compliance with the covenant of grace, had a right to be received as the object of public charity, though he ſhould ſcruple his own converſion, and ſay he did not think himſelf converted."* Whoever profeſſes that he does not think himſelf converted, profeſſes that he does not view himſelf as a ſaint in heart. And if ſuch a one has no right to come into the church; then they who have the evidence of his own confeſſion, that he does not ſo view himſelf, have full evidence that he has no right to come to the ſacrament. And then it is unlawful for them to receive him; for this would be conſenting to his doing what he had no right to do, which would make them partakers with him in his ſin. And if Mr. Edwards has ſometimes ſeemed to expreſs a different ſentiment, yet it ſhould be conſidered that he has repeatedly publiſhed his

* Preface to his Farewel Sermon, and Anſwer to Williams, p. 8.

judgment to be as above repreſented; that he explained his opinion in this manner very particularly and expreſsly, before a council, as he ſays, and inſerted it in his laſt publication on the ſubject, as expreſſing his moſt ripe and deliberate determination, after revolving the ſubject in his mind, for ſeveral years, with great attention.

I ſhall not detain the reader with more particular obſervations on this ſection, as I find little or nothing contained in it, but what has been before conſidered.

SECTION V.

Mr. E. has not fairly repreſented the "notion" which he has made the object of his *Strictures* in this ſection. It is not poſitively ſaid in the chapter and ſection he has referred to, nor in any other part of the Diſcourſe, that "Sinners have as good a right to partake of the ſacrament as to attend any other religious duties; but the aſſertion is only conditional. If any ſuch are rightful church members in full communion, then it appears not but that they may as lawfully partake of the Lord's ſupper as attend other religious duties.

It is indeed plainly ſuggeſted as the author's opinion, that there may be many graceleſs perſons of this character—that this ſeems to be generally ſuppoſed—that the ſcriptures countenance the ſuppoſition—that the contrary cannot be proved. But further than this I have not preſumed to determine. But it was expreſsly ſaid, that none but rightful church members, might partake at the Lord's table. And Mr. E. will grant, that rightful church members may come. What need, what fitneſs was there then in his bringing again upon the carpet a queſtion which had been fully argued before? It was a very different queſtion, which I was conſidering in the place referred to, viz. whether a rightful church member, who doubts his own ſincerity, has more reaſon to refrain from coming to the Lord's ſupper, leſt he ſhould partake unworthily, than he has to refrain from other religious duties? And it ſeems Mr. E. objects not to the anſwer which was given, upon the footing upon which the caſe was put: But, he ſays, that the unregenerate ought not to come to the ſacrament, and ſets himſelf to argue this point over again, out of order. But at this rate, when ſhall we get to the end of the argument? And how often muſt we go over the ſame ground?

It is true there is an order in duties. A man may not be a communicant till he is a profeſſor; nor a profeſſor till he is a believer. But there are ſome profeſſors, and believers, and

church members; ſome who have been acknowledged as ſuch by Chriſt and God himſelf, whoſe faith was not ſaving, as has been before obſerved.

He adds, "The celebration of the ſacrament neceſſarily involves profeſſion of love and union to Chriſt. This is the narrow of the point." I anſwer. This had been diſtinctly attended to in *Diſcourſe*, p. 101, 102. Nor has Mr. E. invalidated what was ſaid in anſwer to this objection. So little reaſon had he to ſay, that I declined "looking the difficulty directly in the face." And I add further, that Mr. Edwards, and others, who profeſs to agree in ſentiment with him, in fact allow, and encourage ſome to come to the ſacrament, who do not, and cannot profeſs that they have ſaving love and union to Chriſt. So that I ſee not but that this difficulty muſt bear as hard upon them, as upon us.

But he ſeems to be troubled at ſomething quoted in the margin from the laſt mentioned author, aſſerting, that it is the duty of the unconverted to attend the means of converſion; a point on which he ſays "I had been once and again refuted." But ſuppoſe I have been refuted ever ſo often, ſtill it cannot be denied, that Mr. Edwards, and the generality of thoſe who agree with him in ſentiment on the qualifications for church membership, hold with me on that point. I might therefore in arguing with them, urge this as a point in which we both agreed. Nor are the quoted words "unguarded expreſſions," as Mr. Emmons pretends, but ſupported with ſolid reaſons. It is teſtified alſo by thoſe who had a long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Edwards, that he was conſtantly of the opinion expreſſed in the forementioned quotation. And however Mr. Emmons may think it has been refuted, the greater part of judicious chriſtians think otherwiſe. As to what he objects, that the unconverted muſt needs lie, if they profeſs religion, it has been anſwered before.

It ſeems, I think, pretty extraordinary to be cenſured for "reducing the duty of attending the ſacrament to a level with other religious duties," by thoſe who hold, that the unconverted, while ſuch, have no more right, or warrant to pray, or read, or make the leaſt attempt in religion, than they have to come to the Lord's ſupper. Let the common ſenſe of chriſtians ſay, whether this is not reducing religious duties to a level.

As to what he has ſuggeſted, which he thinks "bears hard againſt my own ſcheme." I anſwer: He who knows himſelf to be graceleſs, may not come to the Lord's ſupper; becauſe he cannot profeſs, aſſent and conſent to the chriſtian religion in

moral ſincerity. Such a profeſſion is implied in receiving the ſacrament: and whoever can thus profeſs in veracity, cannot know that he is graceleſs. And if one cannot attend any other duty, without making ſuch a profeſſion, as one who knows himſelf to be graceleſs, cannot make in moral ſincerity, then one who knows himſelf to be graceleſs ought not to do it. But according to *my ſcheme*, no ſuch profeſſion is implied in attending the common means of religion; as is alſo obſerved by Mr. Edwards, Humble Enquiry, p. 115. A man muſt be but a ſuperficial ſpeculatiſt to ſtumble, and not be able to get over ſuch a ſtraw as this.

SECTION VI.

WHETHER the Lord's ſupper be a converting ordinance, is not a caſe of conſcience, but a mere ſpeculative queſtion; as much ſo as if it were inquired, of what uſe is water baptiſm to an infant? God's ordinances are adapted to anſwer the ends for which they were inſtituted; whether we are able, or not, certainly to determine what theſe ends are; it is our duty to attend thoſe ordinances, which God has enjoined on us. What ſpecial ends they are deſigned to ſubſerve, it is not ſo much our concern to know.

In the *Diſcourſe on the Church*, ſome things were ſuggeſted in favor of the poſition, that the Lord's ſupper might be deſigned as a mean of converſion to ſuch church members as are not ſavingly converted. But as I did not find that the point was clearly determined in the ſcriptures, and it ſeemed not to be of great practical importance, it was ſtill left as a problem, of which nothing was poſitively decided. This modeſty and caution, it was thought, would not be blamed by men of candor. But Mr. E. is a man from whom nothing of this kind is to be expected. He exclaims at it, as *very ſingular* and *extraordinary*, that I ſhould "heſitate in bringing out my *ſupreme point*, on which, he ſays, the great ſubject of controverſy between the Stoddardeans and Edwardeans, as to terms of communion, *reſts*." But as I profeſs myſelf no party in that controverſy, nay, have declared my diſſent from both parties in ſome things, I ſee not how I am concerned in this reflection of Mr. E. My concluſion may ſtand, I conceive, however this problem may be reſolved. Beſides, ſome will think it a *ſingular* obſervation that *a controverſy* ſhould *reſt* on the *ſupreme point*, or concluſion, in which it iſſues. The common way of building is for the higher parts, the *ſupreme point*, to reſt on ſome foundation, and not for the whole body of the ſtructure to *reſt* upon the top, or

ſupreme point. Mr. E. indeed, ſeems to have conſtructed his ſcheme in the way he has here intimated; that is, without any foundation for it to reſt upon. That the Lord's ſupper is a converting ordinance may be a *natural inference* from Mr. Stoddard's doctrine, reſpecting the terms of communion; but it is not the foundation on which it *reſts*. And if it be ſuppoſed unlawful for a graceleſs perſon to come to the ſacrament, as Mr. E. holds, this will not prove, *upon his principles*, but that it may be a converting ordinance, as well as attending upon the word of God, or any other means of religion: For he holds, that it is unlawful for a man to attend on any ordinance of religion, while graceleſs, as well as come to the ſacrament; and yet I ſuppoſe he will not deny but that there are converting ordinances.

But he aſks, "If it be not a converting ordinance, why ſhould I write a book to prove that unconverted men ought to attend it?" I anſwer. 1. I have not maintained that perſons, known to be unconverted, ought to attend, but thoſe only in whom hopeful ſigns of grace appear; and all allow that theſe ought to come. If ſome of theſe are graceleſs, yet ſo long as this appears not, it can be no reaſon for their not coming. 2. I know not but that the Lord's ſupper may be a converting ordinance to viſible ſaints, who are unconverted. But however, I am fully ſatisfied that all who can profeſs religion in ſincerity, ſo far as they know themſelves, and are not ſcandalous, may and ought to come to communion. 3. If the Lord's ſupper be not a converting ordinance, yet good ends may be anſwered by viſible ſaints coming to it, though graceleſs. Hereby the profeſſion and outward ordinances of the goſpel may be kept among a people, that the viſible church may not be diſſolved, but may remain as a light in the world, a city on a hill, "to call men both by example and inſtruction to attend to it, and by the form of religion ever before their eyes, remind them of the reality of it."* Other good ends, unknown to us, may, perhaps, be ſubſerved. So that it is very weak and unreaſonable in Mr. E. to ſay, that by ſpeaking doubtfully to this queſtion, I have given up all that is of any conſequence in the diſpute.

But Mr. Emmons has formed a ſhrewd argument from my doubtful anſwer to the forementioned queſtion. Says he, "If the Doctor, after ſtudying the ſubject, and writing a long diſcourſe upon it, cannot yet determine whether the ſacrament be a converting ordinance, who can? He has had the advantage of Mr. Stoddard's arguments, [N. B. I never ſaw any of his

* Doctor Butler.

writings on the ſubject,] and of his own long, cloſe, and penetrating attention to this ſingle point; and yet, after all, cannot determine in his own mind, that the ſacrament is a converting ordinance. The Doctor's uncertainty, in theſe circumſtances, amounts to a violent preſumption, that the ſacrament is not a converting ordinance."

I have ventured to look this argument in the face. One might eaſily retort it, if it were worth while to amuſe one's ſelf with trifling. But if the cauſe he has eſpouſed has no better arguments to ſupport it, or if it needs ſuch ſupports, I doubt it is likely to run low.

But he ſays, "There is great harm and danger in maintaining that the Lord's ſupper is a converting ordinance." Anſwer. 1. There ſeems to be no danger, if it be admitted that graceleſs perſons may be rightful church members, and have a right of acceſs to this ordinance; and it is only on this ſuppoſition that the point was argued. 2. Nor do I ſee what danger there is in believing the Lord's ſupper may be a converting ordinance, *even upon Mr. E's principle*, that it is not lawful for the unconverted to attend upon it. For it is alſo, according to him, unlawful for any to attend upon the preaching of the goſpel, while unconverted, and yet there is, I conceive, no harm or danger in believing the preaching of the goſpel to be a converting ordinance.

I heartily agree with him, however, that "it highly concerns the leaders in the church to be very cautious on this intereſting point." To keep as cloſe as they can to the goſpel rule, neither making any thing a term of communion, which, according to this rule, is not neceſſary, nor diſpenſing with any thing which appears to be neceſſary.

SECTION VII.

WHAT Mr. E. has advanced to diſprove the church membership of infants has been conſidered in our remarks on his ſecond chapter, which treats of the covenant of grace. His opinion ſo is contrary to plain and pointed ſcripture teſtimonies, to the concurrent judgment of all chriſtian churches, except the anabaptiſts is ſupported by ſuch weak reaſons, and has been ſo often confuted by ſolid arguments, none of which he has attempted to anſwer, that my remarks on this ſection will be ſhort.

Though I have expreſsly ſaid that adult perſons are not admitted into the church upon the ſame terms with infants, "that a profeſſion of the chriſtian religion is neceſſary to give a right

of admiſſion to an adult perſon." And Mr. E. himſelf, ſays, p. 20, that, "*I* ſuppoſe that none but infants can be taken into covenant without conſenting to the covenant," yet he here inſinuates, that I have built my arguments concerning the terms of communion on the church memberſhip of infants: If the reader will be at the trouble to examine all the places Mr. E. has referred to, in which the church memberſhip of infants is mentioned, he may ſee that nothing more is argued from it than what is aſſerted in ſcripture, acknowledged by all chriſtians, even by himſelf, viz. that graceleſs perſons may be viſible ſaints, and church members. But on what terms adult perſons are to be admitted to full communion, I have no more argued from that topic than did Dr. Watts or Mr. Edwards. And it was very unfair in him to ſuggeſt ſuch an idea to his readers.

It is true I did take the church memberſhip of infants for granted; and I had a right ſo to do. For *granted it is* by all with whom I ſuppoſed myſelf concerned, even all who acknowledge infant baptiſm, as Mr. Edwards ſays. And if this point was not argued in the *Diſcourſe*, yet others had proved it abundantly; yea, I had alſo publiſhed ſomething on the ſubject; ſo that I have not neglected to ſupport my opinion, as Mr. E. impertinently aſſerts.

As to what he alledges, I anſwer. Though infants are not brought into covenant by their own act, yet they are by the act of their parents, who are authorized to covenant for themſelves and their children; and by God, who has ſo conſtituted the covenant, that the bond and privileges of it extend to both, as has been often demonſtrated.

The anabaptiſts, we conceive, are wrong in denying the church memberſhip of infants; but they are conſiſtent with themſelves, in refuſing to baptize them. Mr. E. with an inconſiſtency and abſurdity peculiar to himſelf, baptizes them, though he has given up the only ſolid foundation for it.

SECTION VIII.

THE diſcuſſion of the queſtion concerning partial communion was profeſſedly waved in *the Diſcourſe on the Church*. But as I had expreſſed my conſent to the reſult of the ſynod at Boſton, in the year 1662, Mr. E. has made this an object of his *Strictures*. How he diſcovered that I ſuppoſed what I there hinted might ſettle any diſpute relative to that point (a thought which never entered into my heart) I leave to the conſideration of others: Though I ſee not why it might not as well ſettle that

point, as his *Strictures*, which have pretended to ſettle many diſputed points by mere *ipſe dixit*, without the ſhadow of a reaſon.

He ſays, "I take for granted the main points from which I argue." I anſwer. So does every one who pretends to argue. Can there be any arguing, unleſs ſome principles are ſuppoſed to be mutually agreed to? I ſuppoſe whatever *appears to be granted* may warrantably be *taken for granted*. Now the queſtion is, what are thoſe things which are taken for granted? and had I a right thus to take them? Mr. E. mentions theſe following: "That thoſe who are baptized in infancy grow up members of the church." I anſwer. I have ſhewn that the church memberſhip of children *is granted*; and that they continue members till they are ſome way excommunicated, is ſelf evident; and *is granted* by all proteſtant churches; and expreſsly by Mr. Edwards, who ſays, "Some who were baptized in infancy, even after they come to be adult, may yet remain for a ſeaſon ſhort of ſuch a ſtanding as has been ſpoken of, [that is full communion] and yet not be caſt out of the church, or ceaſe to be, in any reſpect, its members." Humble Enquiry, page 1, 2. This, therefore, may warrantably *be taken for granted*, that thoſe who are already members may be members without a new formal admiſſion, I think never was, or will be denied by any reaſonable man. This, which is the ſecond point mentioned by Mr. E. I have ſurely a right to *take for granted*. That church members will continue members, until they are *formally* excommunicated is not taken for granted. But it is *granted* that they may continue members, when adult, though not in full communion, as has juſt been noted, "That they have a right to remain in doubt as to the real ſtate of their mind" is not taken for granted. But that which is as ſufficient for my purpoſe *is granted* by all, and very fully by Mr. Edwards, viz. that a chriſtian, being in doubt, as to the ſtate of his mind, does not diſqualify him for continuing a member of the church. This appears from fore-quoted paſſages. Upon theſe principles, *which are granted in fact* by all with whom I ſuppoſed myſelf concerned, my reaſoning on this head, it ſeems, is acknowledged to be good.

But Mr. E. to clear the coaſt thoroughly, denies them all, "having endeavored to prove that no infants can belong to the church." But as he has failed in his attempt, and we find ſcripture, and the judgment of the church, are againſt him, his unſupported denial moves us not.

He adds, "Before we can admit one to partial communion, we muſt find a ſcripture warrant to ſeparate what God has join-

ed together, namely, baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper." One would think that he ought to have found ſome warrant for this, before he ſeparated theſe ordinances, as he does, in baptizing infants, whom he admits not to the Lord's ſupper. "But theſe ordinances as they reſpect the adult, he ſays, ſtand on a level. The qualifications for the one, are the ſame as the qualifications for the other." But this is contrary; not only to the general ſenſe of our churches, but alſo of all the proteſtant churches, and of the ancient church, as has been proved by Mr. Mitchel, who has ſhewn by teſtimonies, "That the churches of Chriſt in all, and eſpecially in the beſt ages, and the choiceſt lights therein, both ancient and modern, have concurred and met in this principle, that baptiſm is of larger extent than the Lord's ſupper, ſo as that many, that are within the viſible church may have baptiſm for themſelves, or at leaſt for their children, who yet ought not preſently to partake of the Lord's ſupper, or who do, at preſent, want actual fitneſs for it." Anſwer to the Apologetical preface, p. 27. Nor has Mr. Emmons hinted any thing in ſupport of this his aſſertion. And yet he is the man who has taxed me with cheaply taking principles for granted, when I did not pretend to be arguing a point, and when the mentioned principles are *granted in fact.*

SECTION IX.

THAT the Jewiſh church was a mere type of the chriſtian, Mr. E. has unwarrantably aſſerted to be my opinion, though I never once ſaid, or intimated, or thought ſo. Nor do I know that this ſentiment has been adopted by any divine, or that any uſe has been made of it, in the ſacramental controverſy, though ſome have argued from the church under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, to the church under the chriſtian diſpenſation, ſuppoſing that the church was one and the ſame for ſubſtance in every age of the world.

The words he has quoted from the *Diſcourſe*, ſpeak not of the *Jewiſh church*, but of the *Hebrew commonwealth*, or civil ſtate, which was a kingdom of this world, as all civil States are. But it was an earthly theocracy, or kingdom of God, ſo was a type or figure of the heavenly theocracy, the kingdom of heaven, the church of Chriſt. David ſeated in the throne upon the holy hill of Zion, was a type of Chriſt ruling his church, &c. This is a common ſentiment among chriſtians; nor do I know that "it is denied by any:" Nor have I "taken it for granted," though I have mentioned it as my opinion; nor have I pre-

tended to maintain it; much leſs to improve it as the foundation of my whole ſcheme, or any part of it, or built any thing upon it; nor have I once mentioned it, or hinted at it, in the whole Diſcourſe, after I had mentioned it merely as an illuſtrating parallel to ſomething, which is no matter of controverſy, viz. that all who are intereſted in the covenent, are members of the church. In ſhort, Mr. E. ſeems to have been in a dream, while he was writing this whole ſection, and diſturbed by a mere phantom of his own imagination.

SECTION X.

IN the laſt place we are preſented with ſuch a general view of the *Diſcourſe* as he has thought fit to give.

His compliment upon the author does as much honor to his own candor and generoſity, as it meant to do to the perſon who is the object of it. But ſome are apt to take things by the wrong handle. Such may perhaps ſuppoſe that this was only a piece of low cunning commonly uſed by inſidious calumniators, who will give one a few fair words, when they are aiming to give a murderous ſtab. But intelligent readers will take his expreſſions of civility as they were meant.

I. Several defects are mentioned in the *Diſcourſe*, which he ſays "are *hardly veniable*." They muſt be very bad faults to juſtify ſo hard a cenſure from one, who himſelf, probably, needs ſome favorable indulgence.

The firſt defect he mentions, is, "a certain obſcurity of expreſſion, method, deſign." How it may appear to others, I know not. But this fault, if real, was undeſigned, and ſo I would hope more pardonable. But, as Biſhop Butler obſerves, "Thoſe only are judges, how far this is a fault, who will be at the trouble to underſtand what is ſaid, and to ſee how far the things inſiſted on, might have been put in a plainer manner." As Mr. E. has not been at this trouble, I challenge him as an incompetent judge.

The ſecond defect mentioned, is, "want of proof." One would think that he, of all men in the world almoſt, ought not to hold this to be an unpardonable defect. For I think it will not be eaſy to find a controverſial diſſertation more deficient of a *ſhew of proof* than his is from the beginning to the end. As the Diſcourſe on the Church is grounded mainly, on principles in which chriſtians are very generally agreed, it was thought it would be a ſaving of needleſs trouble and expenſe, not to inſiſt much on the proof of *granted points*. And that

theſe principles are juſtly argued upon, Mr. E. in effect, confeſſes. For he ſays, "if theſe be true, the ſcheme I have built upon them is true, and muſt ſtand forever." Accordingly, he bends his whole force againſt theſe received principles: with what ſucceſs we have ſeen; as alſo, how deſtitute of foundation his own are, which he would ſet up in their ſtead.

"The third and greateſt defect," he ſays, "is inconſiſtency." This is what diſputants are apt enough to charge each other with. And oftentimes not without reaſon on both ſides. It ſeems to be a perquiſite of humanity, and therefore I think ſhould not be animadverted upon, too ſeverely, by thoſe who are in the ſame predicament. Eſpecially ſince it may be preſumed that it is involuntary. However, every inſtance pointed at by Mr. E. has been conſidered, and it is not found that his charge has been ſupported in any one of them, as I think the reader may plainly ſee.

On the whole, though the defects he has mentioned are very conſiderable, where they are found in a groſs degree, yet I can by no means think they are the worſt. If we ſhould ſee a book, for inſtance, which carries ſtrong marks of an uncandid, unfair mind, a diſpoſition to cavil and miſrepreſent things, and by wreſting, and torturing, and interpolating expreſſions, ſet them in an odious light, an inattention to ſtrict truth, in reporting matters of fact; theſe, I ſhould think, are worſe faults, and more hardly excuſeable, than thoſe which he has mentioned. And yet theſe things have ſometimes appeared, to the diſgrace of humanity.

As he appears to have been uneaſy at the *recommendation of three aſſociations*, which he mentions, his affliction ſeems to deſerve compaſſion. To comfort him then, I do now inform him, that whoever may have thought fit to ſignify their mind in favor of the publication of the *Diſcourſe*, no recommendation, either of the performance, or its author, was ever expreſſed, or meant to my knowledge. But he, I ſuppoſe, knows of a book on the ſubject, which was recommended to the public attention, by a preface, ſubſcribed by ſeveral reſpectable perſons, ſome of whom confeſs that they had not read it. And no exception was taken at it, that ever I heard.

II. Next follows his *Strictures* on the general deſign of the Diſcourſe, which was to remove ſcruples and reconcile differences. As he allows this deſign to be laudable, ſo I agree with him that it ought to be promoted by laudable means, particularly "by the exhibition of light." This was what I all along endeavored, by fairly repreſenting "the bible qualifications for church communion." Thoſe who maintain theſe are, as

he ſays, really in the right, and thoſe who maintain any different qualifications, whether higher or lower, are really in the wrong. And though there is no right medium between right and wrong, yet there may be "a middle way between the contending parties," in the caſe we have been conſidering; and this middle way may be the right ſcriptural way, if, as it often happens, the contending parties have gone into oppoſite extremes. And though it is certainly an evidence of "*weakneſs*," when men run into erroneous extremes, yet ſome are not ſo conceited and opinionative, as to take it for an affront "of an irreconciling tendency," to have their miſtakes pointed out to them, and to admit that light which diſcovers them. And when thoſe who are in oppoſite extremes mutually recede from them, the difference between them will vaniſh, and they will meet in the truth, which lies in the *middle way*, or at leaſt will approach nearer to it, and to one another.

However, if men cannot ſee reaſon to recede from their former opinions, yet it may promote peace and reconciliation between contending parties, if they find that the difference is not ſo great or important as it was conceived to be. And it is of great uſe to ſuggeſt this, and make it appear, ſo far as it can truly and fairly be done.

It is apprehended that ſome things have been advanced on both ſides in the diſpute concerning the qualifications for church communion, which the authors could not maintain conſiſtently with their own profeſſed principles. Theſe ſhould be given up. Other things have been miſunderſtood, and taken in an ill ſenſe, which was not meant. Theſe ſhould be truly and candidly explained, and repreſented. In theſe ways I have endeavored to reconcile, or narrow the differences of chriſtians. And I ſee not but that theſe are proper means to promote this laudable end.

As I find nothing more under this head which concerns me, I ſhall only obſerve that he has given his own ſtatement of the difference between the Stoddardeans and the Edwardeans, as he terms them, in the following words:

"As to the right of admiſſion," he ſays, "the Edwardeans maintain that the church ought to receive none but ſuch as give credible evidence of ſaving grace. On the other hand, the Stoddardeans maintain that the church ought to receive ſuch as give no evidence of ſaving grace."

Mr. Edwards ſays that "Mr. Stoddard declares himſelf ſteadfaſtly of the mind that it is requiſite thoſe be not admitted to the Lord's ſupper, who do not make a public and perſonal pro-

feſſion of their faith, and repentance, to the juſt ſatisfaction of the church. That there muſt be a viſibility of ſaving converſion to a judgment of charity." I aſk now, wherein do the terms, as ſtated by Mr. Stoddard, differ from thoſe which Mr. E. ſays the Edwardeans maintain? Or ought we to believe Mr. E.'s unvouched account in direct contradiction to Mr. Stoddard's own words? Eſpecially when it appears to Mr. Emmons's infirmity to be apt to make miſtakes in his repreſentations. And if Mr. Edwards thought that Mr. Stoddard differed from his opponents more in reality than appearance; Mr. Stoddard, who muſt be allowed to know his own meaning beſt, declared "that the difference was rather in words than reality." And whether Mr. Emmons has miſrepreſented others, or not, I have ſuch plentiful evidence of his miſrepreſentations before me, that I am cautious of depending on his accounts, unleſs he produces his vouchers.

I might alſo obſerve, that as he has ſtated the matter, the point which he has endeavored to maintain in oppoſition to me, namely, that a church may admit none but ſuch as they abſolutely believe are true ſaints, is wholly omitted, ſo that either this is no part of the Edwardean ſcheme, or he has given a very defective repreſentation, and omitted the main, if not the only principle in which it differs from that of Mr. Stoddard, as to the rule of admiſſion. Mr. Edwards indeed ſometimes expreſſes himſelf on this point much as Mr. Emmons has done. But his diſtinction of *public* and *private* judgment, which coincides with that of the judgment of charity, and an abſolute belief, ſoftens the matter very much; and gives reaſon to think that his judgment on that point was different from what Mr. Emmons pleads for.

His ſtatement of the point of diſpute as to the right of acceſs, is, I think, agreeable to what I have conceived of it. But I have ſhewn that Mr. Edwards has not been conſtant to the Edwardean principle as here ſtated. For he holds that ſome may and ought to come and be received into full communion who do not believe themſelves to be converted, but greatly doubt of it, as was before noted.

To finiſh this head, Mr. E's aim and ſcope ſeems to be to exaggerate and widen the differences of chriſtians to the utmoſt, and repreſent them as being at ſo great and important a diſtance; and that one ſide is ſo wholly in the right, that all conciliating meaſures or propoſals muſt be in vain, unleſs one ſide will fully come into the views and ſentiments of the other. This, I think, is a very wrong repreſentation. It is certain

that thoſe excellent men, who have debated theſe things among themſelves, have always profeſſed very different apprehenſions. And whether it be a laudable deſign for any to endeavor to inflame and fix diſaffections among chriſtians, to tear open and widen the wounds of the church, deſerves to be ſeriouſly conſidered.

III. We have, in the laſt place, his *Strictures* on the general tendency of the *Diſcourſe*. "It appears," he ſays, "to be deſigned and calculated to prevent people's attending to this controverſy. It repreſents the diſpute of ſmall practical importance." In his introduction it was repreſented as ill done in the author of the *Diſcourſe* to revive a diſpute which had reſted for ſeveral years. Now it ſeems he is blameable for aiming to huſh it up, by inſinuating that both parties are nearly agreed in opinion. So that it ſeems I muſt be hit on both ſides. But I anſwer. If people ſhould not attend to it as a ſubject of controverſy, they may yet attend to it as an article of the chriſtian religion, which it is of importance that they rightly underſtand. And if the truth be ſet in a juſt light, with its proper evidence, ſo that chriſtians rightly underſtand it, and are eſtabliſhed in it; it matters not, if the controverſies by which the ſubject has been puzzled and darkened, be ſuffered to ſink into oblivion. And I add further, that it ſeems to be an encouragement to attend a ſubject, if we underſtand that wiſe and good men agree in the ſubſtance of the doctrine, differing not widely, nor in things of practical importance. It has been often mentioned as a diſcouragement from reading intricate diſputes, that ordinary chriſtians cannot think themſelves capable of underſtanding points on which the wiſeſt men differ ſo widely, and that it is vain and needleſs for them to trouble themſelves about them.

He ſays, "I tell people, if they only think they ought to come, they will be accepted of God. This is groſsly falſe, and he has produced nothing to ſupport it. Nay, he had before quoted ſeveral ſentences, p. 108, in which he ſays I have granted, "That thoſe who have not credible evidence of inward ſanctification, in the view of a rightly informed conſcience, have no right of acceſs." I have alſo declared that even true chriſtians, whoſe right of acceſs is indiſputable, will not be accepted of God, unleſs they eat and drink worthily. I am ſorry to expoſe ſuch things as every good man, every man of common honeſty muſt abhor. Theſe things ought not ſo to be.

His next *Stricture* affirms that "The Diſcourſe is framed from beginning to end, ſo as to lead undiſcerning readers to

miſtake morality for religion." It is impoſſible to ſay what miſtakes undiſcerning readers may make; nor do I know exactly what he means by *morality* as oppoſed to religion; an ambiguous word which is never uſed, to my remembrance, in the whole Diſcourſe, or any thing ſaid of it. Readers of common diſcernment will find true religion is conſtantly repreſented as conſiſting in faith, repentance, approbation of, and conſent, and obedience to the goſpel, &c. If this be what he means by *morality*, and if he conceives religion to be ſomething eſſentially different from this, he ſhould explain himſelf, and then we ſhould know what to ſay to him. He adds, that "I allow moraliſts to call their morality by the agreeable name of holineſs." I anſwer. I ſay nothing about moraliſts, nor has he told us whom he means by them. I was ſpeaking of thoſe whom the ſcripture calls *ſaints*; and of that qualification which gives men that denomination. And if the ſcriptures give the title of ſaints to ſome who are not ſaints in heart, as they certainly do, why am I blamed for ſaying ſo? I had no hand in compoſing the ſcriptures, nor am I authorized to correct them. If by *morality* he means any thing different from inward ſanctification; then, whether it be external holineſs or not, it is very falſe in him to ſay, that I have aſſured any that it is as really acceptable to God as inward ſanctification. What diſcoveries ſelf righteous perſons may make in the bible I know not; but common chriſtians eaſily diſcover that ſome who are not the ſubjects of ſaving grace are in the covenant, and ſo are the ſubjects of federal holineſs, and are ſtiled ſaints. Nor has Mr. E. how often ſoever he has aſſerted the contrary, once attempted to prove his aſſertion by ſcripture.

He then pretends to be alarmed at the danger of "*ſelf righteous moraliſts*; than whom," he ſays, "no perſons are in more danger of being ſelf deceived." But who are meant by this deſcription? Does he mean thoſe who, under a profeſſion of chriſtianity, breathe the ſpirit and tread in the ſteps of the old phariſees, who bleſs themſelves in their own hearts, that *they are not like other men, who truſt in themſelves that they are righteous, and deſpiſe* others, who are conceited of their own ſuperior knowledge in matters of religion; "*And are confident that they themſelves are guides of the blind, a light of them that are in darkneſs*:" and would take it with as much diſdain to be ſuſpected of weakneſs or blindneſs, as thoſe of old who ſaid "*Are we blind alſo?*" *Who love the higheſt ſeats in the ſynagogues, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi? Who com-*

paſs ſea and land with ſly inſidious arts to make proſelytes, and infuſe their unſavoury leaven into the minds of the ſimple. Who, like the old phariſees, are fond of keeping up their diſtinction and diſtance from thoſe whom they ſuppoſe not to be ſo holy as themſelves; who are preciſe in contending for traditions, and little punctilios, and circumſtances in religion, like *tithing of herbs*, or *ſtraining for gnats*, but exhibit little of that "wiſdom which is from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocriſy?" In a word, does he mean evangelical phariſees, hypocrites, who are deluded with their fancied experiences, feelings and exerciſes of heart? There ſeems indeed reaſon to be alarmed for them. Mr. Edwards ſaid "He had ſcarce known the inſtance of ſuch a one in his life who had been undeceived." But what can be done for them? Any attempt to recover them from the error of their way will be apt to be reſented, as an affront "of an irreconciling tendency," which they will trample under their feet, and turn again and rend us.

The next Strićture affirms, that "I have encouraged moraliſts to come to the table of the Lord." He acknowledges that ſuch only are, by me, encouraged to come as have "credible evidence of inward ſanctification in the view of a rightly informed conſcience." If theſe are not the perſons he means by moraliſts, he cannot ſupport his charge. If he means the hypocrites above deſcribed, I grant theſe are in danger of being fixed down *by his doctrine* in ſelf deception and carnal ſecurity. But I have not ſaid that theſe have a right of acceſs; nor does my doctrine encourage preſumption in thoſe who have, as is very evident.

His laſt remark is "The Diſcourſe tends directly to deſtroy the appearance of religion in the viſible church." The Diſcourſe holds forth that none are to be admitted to the table but ſound profeſſors of chriſtianity, of a blameleſs life. And who in a judgment of charity are ſaints in heart: "And who alſo manifeſt ſo much ſpiritual knowledge, ſuch eſtabliſhment in their holy faith, ſuch diſpoſitions of piety, as give reaſon to hope that they will adorn their profeſſion by an exemplary life. And it appearing alſo that they ſo far underſtand the nature, ends, and proper uſes of the Lord's ſupper, as to be capable of examining themſelves, diſcerning the Lord's body, and ſo eating that bread and drinking that cup in remembrance of him, as that their ſouls may be nouriſhed with the bread of life, and their ſpiritual edification ſubſerved and promoted." Diſcourſe,

p. 72. To practice according to this rule, it ſeems, tends directly to deſtroy the appearance of religion in the viſible church.

But he ſays, "I intimate that thoſe who are baptized in infancy may be admitted to communion without a public profeſſion of religion." Anſwer. This is another groſs falſehood. On the contrary, it is expreſsly ſaid, "A viſible ſaint holds his ſtanding in the viſible church, upon the condition of his abiding in a credible profeſſion of faith, whether the mode of profeſſing before the whole church, as commonly practiſed with us, be neceſſary or not, I have not intimated. His arguings upon the words *recognize* and *repute*, are like the reſt. As to *formal admiſſion*. They who are already church members need not another formal admiſſion into the church, to make them members and give them a right to ſuch privileges as they appear to be actually fit for. But this proves not but that it may be proper for them to be formally admitted to full communion when they manifeſt actual fitneſs for it.

But Mr. E. pretends dreadful conſequences, "if churches ſhould act on my ſcheme, as explained by Mr. Williams." (How Mr. Williams could explain my ſcheme, while he was ignorant of it, I underſtand not.) "Suppoſe," ſays he, "our churches ſhould receive to their communion, all ſober perſons who were baptized in infancy," [he ſhould alſo have added, and who exhibit all the qualifications mentioned in the laſt paragraph] without a public profeſſion of religion, would not this practice bring many unqualified perſons to the ſacrament? Are there not ſober Arians, Socinians, Univerſaliſts, Deiſts, Sceptics [that is, who are found unexceptionable profeſſors of true religion, and ſaints in heart in a judgment of charity.] Is it credible that Mr. Emmons could be in his right mind when he wrote this *Stricture*? Or is he become ſo catholic, as to acknowledge Sceptics, Deiſts, &c. to have all the qualifications for church communion above mentioned?

I readily grant, that churches ſhould be very ſtrict in obſerving the rules of the goſpel in their admiſſion to church-fellowſhip; and *requiring ſuch demonſtrations of a repenting and believing ſoul* as the goſpel requires. If public relation, as a term of admiſſion into the church, can be proved to be of divine inſtitution, let them be inſiſted on. If not, let churches and chriſtians uſe their liberty, and ſtand faſt in it. We may ſhew all due honor to thoſe whoſe memory is bleſſed, without calling any man father upon earth. And we have more reaſon to be jealous of our chriſtian liberty, when any appear diſpoſed to make ſuch things terms of communion, which appear not to

be of divine or even human inſtitution, and for which nothing can be pleaded, but that they are cuſtoms in ſome churches. To impoſe the obſervance of human cuſtoms and traditions as neceſſary (however lawful and laudable they may ſeem, if uſed prudently) is an infringement of chriſtian liberty and has always had a moſt pernicious influence to beget ſuperſtition, currupt the purity and ſimplicity of evangelical worſhip, to overthrow and confound the order, and deform the beauty of the church. We ſhould be careful neither to add to the rule nor diminiſh from it.

What Mr. E. quotes from the reſult of the Synod at Boſton, in 1662, is agreeable to the ſentiments expreſſed in the Diſcourſe p. 32, 33, 72. The firſt miniſters of NewEngland adopted their principles after much careful examination. And they knew how to draw fair conſequences from them far better than Mr. E. if we may judge of his logical talents from the ſpecimen he has given in his Diſſertation and Strictures. They ſaw plainly, as any intelligent perſon, one would think might eaſily ſee, that what Mr. E. calls the natural conſequence of their acknowledging children to be church members is no conſequence. Mr. E. holds it to be a natural and neceſſary conſequence of this principle, that all baptized perſons may come and be admitted to the Lord's ſupper, without any evidence given of their being actually capable and fit to attend upon it in a due manner. And, as if this were granted, or ſelf evident, contents himſelf with *barely ſaying ſo*, without the leaſt attempt to prove it, though he could not but know that this conſequence is denied. Then after ſaying, that "I maintain that baptized infants are members of the viſible church; and *therefore conclude*, that when they arrive to adult years, they ought to be recognized as members in full communion, without a public profeſſion of religion, (which is what I have never ſaid, or intimated;) he adds, that I am more conſiſtent than our fathers were. But as I have advanced nothing upon this point, repugnant to what has been all along generally profeſſed in our churches, and in all the proteſtant churches, I ſee no need of vindicating our common doctrine from Mr. E's charge of inconſiſtency, till ſomething more conſiderable appears in ſupport of the charge, than the bare affirmation of Mr. Emmons. But this is the way in which he has ſettled all the diſputed points which occur. He gravely decides them *ex cathedra*, without troubling himſelf about proofs.

He concludes, "Is it not a very ſerious and important enquiry, whether the church ought to open their arms ſo wide, as

to take into their boſom thoſe who exhibit no appearance of religion, nor the leaſt regard for the cauſe of God." I anſwer. If the infants of believers are the perſons he means here to deſcribe, this ſerious enquiry may ſoon be reſolved in the affirmative, after the ſcriptures have ſo expreſsly declared that they are ſaints, of whom is the kingdom of heaven, and to whom the promiſe appertains. But I would aſk in my turn, what ſhall we think of a man, who, having blotted many pages with great and injurious miſrepreſentations, would inſinuate with a demure air, that thoſe who hold the church memberſhip of infants, particularly thoſe who, without any deſigned provocation, offered to any one, have been called forth by name upon the public ſtage, and treated in a very harſh uncandid manner: That theſe, I ſay, notwithſtanding their expreſs and conſtant declarations to the contrary, are for having the church receive, to full communion, thoſe who exhibit no appearance of religion, nor the leaſt regard for the cauſe of God, and even Skeptics, Deiſts, and thoſe who hold the moſt antichriſtian and ſcandalous errors? Is this ſpeaking the truth in love? Is it forgotten that men have eyes, and ears, and common ſenſe; and will uſe theſe faculties, and ſee and judge for themſelves, and not be long impoſed upon with reſpect to facts, which may every day be eaſily aſcertained? And have not thoſe who abuſe the confidence of the public by miſrepreſentations, reaſon to be apprehenſive that they are making work for repentance. That when the truth appears, "They will loſe their influence over the minds of men, and fall under the reproach and contempt of the world?"

That profeſſors of true religion only, who are not ſcandalous, are to be admitted to full communion, is a point in which all our churches, I ſuppoſe, profeſs agreement. And if ſome think it not needful that confeſſions of faith be publicly exhibited before the whole church, by ſuch as have been privately examined, and approbated by the authorized door-keepers of the church, does it not ſhew a littleneſs and narrowneſs of mind, to make a noiſe, as if the hedges were all down, and the world were let into the church? If my particular mode of profeſſing religion can be ſhewn to be neceſſary by divine inſtitution, let it be made to appear. Though I well approve the cuſtom in our churches of having profeſſions of religion exhibited in public, yet far be it from me to condemn all proteſtant churches, whoſe cuſtoms are otherwiſe. As to what Mr. E. ſays, "that many churches admit members without any public evidence of their belief of the eſſential doctrines of the goſpel, or of their

experimental acquaintance with religion, I leave it to those whom it concerns, if any such there be, to answer for themselves.

Having thus endeavored to discharge my debt to Mr. Emmons, for the attention he has paid to the Discourse on the Church, with his *Strictures* upon it; I would now balance and close accounts with him. I have not, I confess, received that instruction and edification from his performance which I hoped for. It is exceedingly different from what I should have expected from him. Like other human performances, it has defects; which, though I would not exaggerate, and much less would I be so severe a censor as to pronounce them *not veniable*, yet they are such, as I think, do not promise eminency to the author as a polemic writer. And, it seems to me that he much mistook his own talents when he advanced as the champion of the cause: But I leave it to the impartial public to judge of, and do justice to the merits of his performance.

For my part, it is my sincere wish, if it be possible, as much as in me lies, to live peaceably with all men. I had much rather compose differences on tolerable terms, than carry points by contention. This was my object in offering the Discourse on the Church, to the consideration of the public; which, it was hoped, might in some good measure meet the views of both sides, and secure the main points which seemed to be aimed at. And though this might cross the views of those who were flushed with sanguine expectations of a triumph, yet the promoting of peace, and the comfort of love among good men, it was hoped, would counterbalance the disappointment of those who love contention. I wish to have no controversy with any of my christian brethren, and especially I would have nothing further to do, in this way, with Mr. Emmons. In future I would owe him nothing but love. And if he should have any any more *Strictures* to bestow upon me, I think it is not likely that it will suit with my engagements or inclinations, to receive them, otherwise than as gratuities, for which no returns must be expected. However, I shall endeavor, by God's assistance, to conduct myself as occasions shall require.

May the Lord enable and incline us all to follow peace and holiness; and direct our hearts to the right understanding, sincere love, and united observance of his holy will in all things.

9 7 19

THE END.